

ARGOSY

Issued Weekly



THE PROGRESS OF J. BUNYAN

by Stephen Chalmers

10¢
A COPY

J U L Y 1 0

\$4.00
A YEAR



**Wanted
At \$1,000 a Month!**

Can You Fill This Job?

AN official of one of the largest concerns of its kind in the United States recently asked us to put him in touch with men capable of earning \$3,000 to \$15,000 a year. His letter is typical of many others we receive stating the difficulty of finding men qualified for big jobs.

OUR success in training men and women has given us a nation-wide reputation among large business concerns for developing employees for positions paying \$2,000 to \$10,000 a year and up. Our service has the written endorsement of many leading corporation officials, bankers and business executives.

THE practical value of this service has been tested by men holding responsible positions in practically every large corporation in this country, including 364 employees of Armour and Company; 390 of the Standard Oil Company; 811 of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company; 309 of the United States Steel Corporation; 214 of the Ford Motor Company; 803 of Swift and Company, etc.

HIGH-GRADE positions are always seeking applicants of superior intelligence and train-

ing. By our methods we find employees in subordinate positions who need only the special training we supply to make them high-priced men. For instance, we developed a \$20 a week ledger clerk into a \$7,200 Auditor; a \$70 a month shipping clerk into the Traffic Manager of a big rail and steamship line; a \$300 a month accountant into a \$70,000 a year executive; a small town station agent into a successful lawyer and district attorney; a bookkeeper into a bank executive, etc.

A SHORT period of preliminary training by mail, under the personal direction of LaSalle experts, has been sufficient to increase the earning power of thousands of men from 100% to 600%.

IF YOU are really ambitious to place yourself in a position of higher executive responsibilities let us advise you how our training and service may be of advantage in solving your personal problem of advancement. We have an organization of more than 1,150 people; financial resources exceeding \$4,000,000 and representatives in all the leading cities of America. Our sole business is to help men to better positions.

MARK and mail the coupon below, indicating the kind of position for which you would like to qualify. We will send full particulars, also a free copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," the book that has been an inspiration to more than 215,000 ambitious men. Send for your copy now.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

The Largest Business Training Institution in the World

Dept. 732-R

Chicago, Ill.

Send me free "Ten Years' Promotion in One," also catalog and particulars regarding course and service in the department I have marked with an X.

☐ **HIGHER ACCOUNTANCY:** Training for positions as Auditors, Comptrollers, Certified Public Accountants, Cost Accountants, etc.

☐ **LAW:** Training for Bar; LL.B. Degree.

☐ **COMMERCIAL LAW:** Reading, Reference and Consultation Service for Business Men.

☐ **BANKING AND FINANCE:** Training for executive positions in Banks and Financial Institutions.

☐ **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION:** Training for Official, Managerial, Sales and Executive positions.

☐ **BUSINESS LETTER WRITING:** Training for positions as Correspondents, Mail Sales Directors, and all executive letter-writing positions.

☐ **EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING:** Training in the art of forceful, effective speech for Ministers, Salesmen, Fraternal Leaders, Politicians, Clubmen, etc.

☐ **TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT—FOREIGN & DOMESTIC:** Training for positions as Railroad and Industrial Traffic Managers, Traffic Experts, etc.

☐ **BUSINESS ENGLISH:** Training for Business Correspondents and Copy Writers.

☐ **EXPERT BOOKKEEPING:** Training for position of Head Bookkeeper.

☐ **COMMERCIAL SPANISH:** Training for positions as Foreign Correspondent with Spanish-speaking countries.



☐ **PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY:** Training for Production Managers, Department Heads, and all those desiring training in the 43 factors of efficiency.

☐ **C. P. A. COACHING FOR ADVANCED ACCOUNTANTS:** Prepares for State Board and Institute Examinations.

Name..... Address..... Present Position.....



FREE
For 10 Days Wear

Put It Beside a Diamond



Flat Belcher Ring
Solid gold mounting, with wide flat band. Almost a carat, guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem. Price \$16.50; only \$4.50 on arrival. Balance \$5 per month.



Ladies' Ring
Solid gold mounting. Has a guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem almost a carat in size. Price \$18.50; only \$4.50 upon arrival. Balance \$5 per month.



Tooth Belcher Ring
Solid gold six-prong tooth mounting. Guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem, almost a carat in size. Price \$18.50; only \$4.50 upon arrival. Balance \$5 per month.

To quickly introduce into every locality our beautiful TIFNITE GEMS, we will absolutely and positively send them out FREE and on trial for 10 days' wear. You simply pay only \$4.50 on arrival, balance \$3.00 per month if satisfactory. In appearance and by every test, these wonderful gems are so much like a diamond that even an expert can hardly tell the difference. But only 10,000 will be shipped on this plan. To take advantage of it, you must act quickly.

Solid Gold Mountings

some solid gold mounting—after you have carefully made an examination and decided that you have a wonderful bargain and want to keep it, you can pay for it in such small payments that you'll hardly miss the money. If you can tell a TIFNITE GEM from a genuine diamond, or if, for any reason at all, you do not wish to keep it, return it at our expense.

Send the coupon NOW! Send no money. Tell us which ring you prefer. We'll send it at once. After you see the beautiful, dazzling gem and the hand-

Remarkable Gem Discovery

The closest thing to a diamond ever discovered. In appearance a TIFNITE and a diamond are as alike as two peas. TIFNITE GEMS have the wonderful pure white color of diamonds of the first water, the dazzling fire, brilliancy, cut and polish. Stand every diamond test—fire, acid and diamond file. Mountings are exclusively fashioned in latest designs—and guaranteed solid gold.

Send No Money

Just send coupon. Send no reference. no money, no obligation to you in any way! You run no risk. The coupon brings you any of the exquisitely beautiful rings shown and described here for 10 days' wear free. Be sure to enclose strip of paper showing exact finger measurement as explained.

Mail This Coupon

Send now and get a TIFNITE GEM on this liberal offer. Wear it for 10 days on trial. Every one sent in latest style Solid gold mountings. Decide then whether you want to keep it or not. Send for yours now—today—sure. Send no money.

The Tifnite Gem Co.

109 East 39th St.
Dept. 780 Chicago, Ill.

How to Order Rings To get the right size ring, cut a strip of heavy paper so that the ends exactly meet when drawn tightly around the second joint of finger on which you want to wear the ring. Be careful that the measuring paper fits snugly without overlapping, and measure at the second joint. Send the strip of paper to us with order coupon.

Mail This Coupon

THE TIFNITE GEM CO.

109 East 39th St., Dept. 780, Chicago, Ill.

Send me Ring No. on 10 days' approval. (In ordering ring, be sure to enclose also as described above.)

I agree to pay \$4.50 on arrival, and balance at the rate of \$3.00 per month. If not satisfactory, I will return same within ten days at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....

THE ARGOSY

Vol. CXXIII

ISSUED WEEKLY

Number 1

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

CONTENTS FOR JULY 10, 1920

FOUR SERIAL STORIES

- THE PROGRESS OF J. BUNYAN. In Four Parts. Part I...STEPHEN CHALMERS 1
CHAPTERS I-V
- PRIDE OF TYSON. In Six Parts. Part II.....JOHN FREDERICK 64
CHAPTERS IX-XVII
- THE CARAVAN OF THE DEAD. In Six Parts. Part V.....HAROLD LAMB 91
CHAPTERS XXIV-XXIX
- SERAPION. In Four Parts. Part IV.....FRANCIS STEVENS 119
CHAPTERS XIV-XXII

ONE COMPLETE NOVELETTE

- THE BIG IDEA.....RAY CUMMINGS 25

SIX SHORT STORIES

- COMRADE EASY-MARK.....JACK BECHDOLT 15
- NEW STUFF FOR ELLIOT.....RAYMOND J. BROWN 55
- MIRRORS.....ROY W. HINDS 84
- HIS OWN FUNERAL.....MELLA RUSSELL McCALLUM 113
- THE MILLVILLE TRICK.....WILL H. GREENFIELD 134
- A RINGING TALE.....GILBERT RIDDELL 138

The weight of

"CIRCUMSTANCES"

BY CHARLES KING VAN RIPER

can be appreciated only by reading it. It begins NEXT WEEK

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 250 Broadway, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$5.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1920.

Entered as second-class matter September 28, 1917, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The advertisements have something to say to you

If a manufacturer could gather 30,000,000 prospective buyers into a large auditorium and talk to them regularly—by word of mouth—he would have no need of advertisements. *But he cannot.*

So he puts his words in type and talks to these same prospective buyers in the printed messages that you know as advertisements. In these pages you will find many such personal messages.

Some are large and some are small. They cover a wide range of subjects. They are worthy of your careful reading.

No manufacturer would spend his good money advertising if his merchandise were not of good quality and fairly priced. It wouldn't pay!

Don't miss the advertisements. They will save you money.



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needs for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$4.00
THE ARGOSY COMBIN		Less 2% cash discount
The Argosy	2.50	
All-Story Weekly		
Minimum space four lines.		

Aug. 14th Argosy Combination Forms Close July 15th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

Extraordinary Opportunity is offered ambitious men to become distributors for new product now being marketed. No competition; demand everywhere. Valuable exclusive rights free. Complete sales help and full co-operation assures success. Start small and grow. \$1000 automobile free. Opportunity to establish large business netting \$10,000 yearly. Act immediately. Garfield Mfg. Co., Dept. A, Garfield Building, Brooklyn, N. Y.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WEAR A BEAUTIFUL NEW SUIT made to your own measure? And make \$35 to \$50 every week? You can be the best dressed man in your town and earn a lot of extra money if you write at once for our beautiful samples and wonderful offer. The Progress Tailoring Co., Dept. 285, Chicago.

AGENTS—LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS AGENTS to sell hosiery, underwear, shirts, dresses, skirts, waists, shoes, clothing, etc. Write for free samples: Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

INSIDE TYRES—Inner Armor For Auto Tyres. Doubles mileage, prevents 90% of all punctures and blowouts. Thousands in use. Tremendous demand. Big sales. Liberal profits. Details free. American Automobile Accessories Co., Dept. 165, Cincinnati, O.

NEWSOM VALVE DOUBLES TIRE MILEAGE. Biggest seller out; motorists buy on sight. Make \$20.00 daily; pocket sample. Write for territory at once. T. Sales Company, Dept. A, 2847 W. Madison street, Chicago.

\$10 WORTH OF FINEST TOILET SOAPS, perfumes, toilet waters, soaps, etc., absolutely free to agents on our refund plan. Lacassian Co., Dept. 614, St. Louis, Mo.

SALESMEN—Side or Main Line to sell low priced \$6.00 made guaranteed tires; 20x3 1/2 non-skid sells for \$13.95; other sizes in proportion. Good money-making proposition for live wires. Master Tire Co., 1414 So. Michigan, Chicago.

AGENTS: Reversible Raincoat. Two coats for the price of one. Something brand new. Not sold in stores. Latest style. Every man wants one. Raincoat sold 28 cents in five days. Write quick for sample and territory. Be first to introduce this big new seller. Thomas Raincoat Co., 2297 North St., Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS: SELL NEVERFAIL IRON RUST AND STAIN REMOVER. Huge profits. Big line. Sample. Write today. Sunford-Bear Co., Inc., Dept. A, Newark, N. Y.

AGENTS—200% PROFIT. WONDERFUL Summer Sellers; something new; sells like wildfire; carry in pocket; write at once for free sample. American Products Company, 2436 American Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

SALESMEN WANTED

BIG MONEY FOR SALESMEN. BUILD YOUR OWN BUSINESS SELLING OUR HIGH GRADE GROCERIES to your neighbors and others. Our quality goods and wholesale prices get orders and repeat orders. Beginners average \$8 a day profit. No investment required. Wonderful chance for money and independence. Our book "Opportunity" tells all about it. Write for it today. National Wholesale Grocers, Dept. 8, 112-116 W. May Street, Chicago.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

LAND IN OUR HARDWOOD DISTRICT Makes You Rich. Productive good grains, vegetables, fruit, and stock grows fat. Plenty of rainfall, markets, schools, churches, railroad, etc. Forty thousand acres to choose from in 10, 20, 40, 80 and 160 acre tracts. No taxes to actual settlers first five years. Free insurance. Every help given settlers. Prices \$15 to \$35 per acre. Easy terms. Write for free booklet. Swartz Land Co., 1245 First National Bank Building, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

BIGGEST MONEY-MAKER IN AMERICA. I want 100 men and women quick to take orders for raincoats, raincoats and waterproof aprons. Thousands of orders waiting for you. \$2.00 an hour for spare time. McDonough made \$81.00 in one month. Nissen \$19.00 in three hours; Purvis \$207.00 in seven days. \$3,000 a year profit for eight average orders a day. No delivering or collecting. Beautiful coat free. No experience or capital required. Write quick for information. Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. Y-127, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—\$40 TO \$100 A WEEK. Free Samples. Gold and silver Sign Letters for stores and office windows. Anyone can put them on. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 421-H, N. Clark, Chicago.

EARN \$50 WEEKLY showing samples for large out-into grocery mail order house. Men wanted everywhere. Sample case free. The Independent Association, Detroit, Mich.

SELL What Millions Want. New, wonderful Liberty Portraits. Creates tremendous interest. Absolutely different; unique; enormous demand—30 hours' service. Liberal credit. Outfit and catalogue free. \$100 weekly profit easy. Consolidated Portrait Co., Dept. 22, 1036 W. Adams St., Chicago.

SELL WORLD'S GREATEST AUTO INVENTION. No more rain windshields; Myst Chemical Felt works wonders; one rub keeps glass clear 24 hours. Steel mountings; fits pocket; whirlwind seller at St. Vetter made \$75 first day. Security Mfg. Co., Dept. 292, Toledo, Ohio.

AMBITIOUS? We will establish you in business; manufacture article wanted everywhere, under your name, for 35¢ each (retailing \$1.50); show your how to reach consumers, dealers, agents, personally and by mail; furnish everything, and advertise for you free. Tremendous repeat business. Kaley of Brooklyn made \$1000 one month. Write for proof. Scientific Laboratories, 21 Court Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mexican Diamonds Flash Like Genies, fool experts, stand tested, yet sell for 1-50th the price. Few live Agents wanted to sell from handsome sample case. Big profits, pleasant work. Write today. Mexican Diamond Imp. Co., Box 88, Las Cruces, N. Mexico.

AGENTS—YOU CAN GET A BEAUTIFUL FAST COLOR ALL WOOL MADE-TO-MEASURE suit without a cent of expense. Write for details. The Mills Co., Dept. 1433, Chicago, Ill., for their liberal suit offer.

AGENTS—OUR SOAP AND TOILET ARTICLE PLAN IS A WONDER. Get our Free Sample Case Offer. Ho-Bo-Co, 127 Locust St., St. Louis, Mo.

SALESMEN—City or traveling. Experience unnecessary. Send for list of lines and full particulars. Prepare in spare time to earn the big salary—\$2,500 to \$10,000 a year. Employment services rendered. Members, National Salesmen's Training Association, Dept. 133-H, Chicago, Ill.

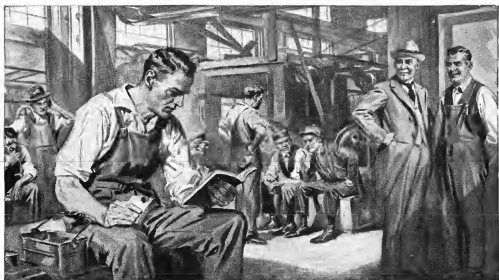
WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything. Men and women. \$20.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty 'Andy Factor' anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. Baggsdale Co., Drawer 85, East Orange, N. J.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN to sell your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the 5,000,000 readers of The Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 B'way, N. Y.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED by 48 companies: \$10 to \$500 each paid for plays. No correspondence course or experience needed. Details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. Producers League, 288 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.



"Keep Your Eye on Jim!"

"It's not alone what a man does *during* working hours, but *outside* of working hours—that determines his future. There are plenty of men who do a good job while they're at it, but who work with one eye on the clock and one ear cocked for the whistle. They long for that loaf at noon and for that evening hour in the bowling alley. They are good workers and they'll always be just that—ten years from now they are likely to be right where they are today.

"But when you see a man putting in his noon hour learning more about his work, you see a man who won't stay down. His job today is just a stepping-stone to something better. He'll never be satisfied until he hits the top. And he'll get there, because he's the kind of man we want in this firm's responsible positions. You can always depend on a man like Jim.

"Every important man in this plant won out in the same way. Our treasurer used to be a bookkeeper. The sales manager started in a branch office up state. The factory superintendent was at a lathe a few years ago. The chief designer rose from the bottom in the drafting room. The traffic manager was a clerk.

"All these men won their advancements through spare time study with the International Correspondence Schools. Today they are earning four or five times—yes, some of them *ten* times as much money as when they came with us.

"That's why I say that Jim there is one of our future executives. Keep your eye on him. Give him every chance—he'll make good!"

Employers everywhere are looking for men who really want to get ahead. If you want to make more money, show your employer that you're trying to be worth more money. If you want more responsibility, show him you're willing to prepare yourself for it.

For 23 years the International Correspondence Schools have been training men and women right in their own homes after supper, or whenever they had a little time to spare. More than two million have stepped up in just this way. More than 110,000 are studying now. Ten thousand are starting every month. Can you afford to let another priceless hour pass without making your start toward something better? Here is all we ask—without obligation, mark and mail this coupon. It's a little thing that takes but a moment, but it's the most important thing you can do today. Do it now!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS BOX 2155-B SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Railways | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Painter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Trainman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker | <input type="checkbox"/> BUSINESS MANAGEMENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATIONARY ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC MANAGER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE OPERATING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Repairing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt. | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GYMNAST | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising <input type="checkbox"/> French |

Name _____
 Present _____
 Occupation _____
 Street _____
 and No. _____
 City _____ State _____

Canadians may send this coupon to
 International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada

WHITING-ADAMS BRUSHES

THREE WINNERS

Made of highest grade pure hog
bristles—stiff and elastic; velvet-
like ends.

Perfect working; long wearing
brushes.

Never fail or shed bristles. Guar-
anteed in every respect.

Send for Illustrated Literature

JOHN L. WHITING-J. J. ADAMS CO.
Boston, U. S. A.

Brush Manufacturers for over 110 Years
and the Largest in the World.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED

**WRITE NEWS ITEMS AND SHORT
STORIES** for pay in spare time. Copyright book and plans free.
Press Reporting Syndicate, 433, St. Louis, Mo.

DO YOU want to earn \$5,000 to \$5,000 a year? You can do it
easily. See Anderson Steam Vulcanizer Display Ad in this issue.

MEN—AGE 17 TO 45. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY.
Travel; make secret investigations; reports. Salaries; expenses.
American Foreign Detective Agency, 320, St. Louis, Mo.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money-
making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful
Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your
copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC. are wanted for publi-
cation. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss. or write
Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

**WRITERS: HAVE YOU A POEM, STORY OR PHOTOPLAY
TO SELL?** Submit MSS. at once to Music Sales Company,
Dept. 60, St. Louis, Mo.

WANTED: COMPOSERS OF VERSE OR MUSIC to write
at leisure. Good opportunity. Send Model or sketch and
Address, Burrell Van Buren, L23, Grand Opera House, Chicago.

WANTED—Poems for publication for magazine of Inspiration
and Practical Help to young writers. Send Mss. to the
Post's Magazine, Room 101, 516 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

AUTOMOBILE SCHOOLS

BE AN AUTO OR TRACTOR EXPERT. Unlimited opportunity
for civil and Government Work. 5000 successful graduates.
Write at once for our big free catalog. Cleveland Auto School,
1819 E. 24th Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS. If you have an invention write for our Guide
Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and
description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable
nature. Randolph & Co., 639 F. Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—Write for Free Illustrated Guide Book and
Evidence of Conception Blank. Send Model or sketch and
description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Free.
Highest References. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms.
Victor J. Evans & Co., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES.
BEST RESULTS. Promptness assured. Send drawing or
model for examination and opinion as to patentability.
Watson E. Coleman, 634 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS PROCURED—TRADE MARKS REGISTERED—
A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection
and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly fur-
nished without charge. Booklet of information and form for
discussing idea free on request. Richard B. Owen, 68 Owen
Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2273 Woolworth Bldg., New York.

YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain
through them things you want; things you might never have
known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike
you other people would read your message—that they would
buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you
no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or
maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will
gladly show you how to use this section most profitably
and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager,
The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

TELEGRAPHY

TELEGRAPHY (BOTH MORSE AND WIRELESS) and
Railway Accounting taught quickly. Tremendous demand. High
salaries. Great opportunities. Oldest and largest school; estab-
lished forty-six years. All expenses low—can earn large part.
Catalog free. Dodge's Institute, 8 St., Valparaiso, Indiana.

TYPEWRITERS

NEW, REBUILT AND SLIGHTLY USED TYPEWRITERS
\$5 up. Portable machines \$10 up. Write for our Catalog 250/G.
Boran Typewriter Co., 58 W. Washington St., Chicago.

Cut Your Tire Cost

Pocket 50% and more by buying 5000 mile **Conqueror
Double-Tread Tires**, made only from the best se-
lected materials, in our own factory by thoroughly
experienced workmen, insure maximum mileage at 1/2
to 3/4 usual cost and are placed on the market with an

IRON CLAD GUARANTY

Put in a supply of your sizes now at these amazingly
low prices, while they last:

	Tire	Tube
30x3	.....\$5.25	.....\$1.75
30x3 1/2	.....6.25	.....1.90
32x2 1/2	.....6.75	.....2.00
31x4	.....7.50	.....2.05
32x4	.....8.00	.....2.15
34x4	.....8.25	.....2.25
34x4 1/2	.....8.50	.....2.35
33x4 1/2	.....9.75	.....3.50
34x4 1/2	.....10.00	.....2.65
35x4 1/2	.....10.50	.....2.65
36x4 1/2	.....11.00	.....2.75
35x5	.....11.75	.....2.85
37x5	.....12.75	.....2.95

RELINER FREE

Tubes are guaranteed fresh stock.
Send only \$2.00 with each tire or-
dered. Balance C.O.D. subject to ex-
amination. For full cash with order
deduct 5%. State whether straight
side or clincher, plain or non-skid
desired. Order NOW—TODAY—get
greatest value for your money.

CONQUEROR TIRE & RUBBER CO.
3031 S. Michigan Blvd. Dept. 123 CHICAGO

The MUNSEY

No other standard magazine ap-
proaches the Munsey record in
putting across successful adver-
tising campaigns single-handed.
The Munsey has established successful businesses, built factories,
made fortunes for advertisers—single-handed. The Munsey pays
advertisers so richly because Munsey readers have money to
spend, ambition to want, and initiative to go and get what they
want. They go and get The Munsey at the news-stand every
month. They go and get any advertised article they want. Have
you such an article? Tell The Munsey readers about it, and get
what you want—results.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 S'way, N. Y. City.



LEARN WIRELESS AT HOME

Attractive and interesting positions at substantial salaries, are always ready for the trained wireless operator. If you want a successful future, one which is filled with real enterprise and adventure as well as financial success, you should take a course in Wireless, for it offers these things instead of the usual continual dull routine of office, shop, or other work.

Salaries including expenses average \$150 a month. There are positions in higher branches of Radio which pay as high as \$6,000 to \$10,000 a year.

Travel Without Expense If you are eager to travel, anxious to visit foreign countries and to increase your knowledge of world affairs, Wireless offers you the chance of a lifetime. On shipboard you are rated as an officer, traveler and sailing with the officers, and mingling with the passengers. Without one cent's expense to you! The continents at home, on land, are just as attractive.



Send for Free Booklet

We have prepared a booklet telling all about Wireless and the future it offers you. Starting facts you will be interested in are freely dispersed. It tells how we have helped hundreds of other ambitious men and women, and how we can help you. Write for your free copy, at your home, by mail, and help you secure a position. Send the coupon today, or write for further information.

NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE

America's First and Foremost

Dept. 252, 14th & U Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Send Coupon for FREE Book

NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE (Write Please)

Dept. 252, 14th & U Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Send me your Free Book, "Wireless, The Opportunity of Today. Tell me about your famous Home Study Course in Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony—your post graduate course—membership in the N. R. I. Relay League and your Special Instrument Office.

Name.....

Age..... Address.....

City..... State.....

Your Chance to Make Big Profits in Vulcanizing

Here is your chance to get into a highly profitable business which will make you independent. High class vulcanizers are in demand everywhere. Many of our graduates make \$5,000 a year and over.

We make the Anderson steam vulcanizer and Anderson retreader and teach you the famous Anderson Method of Vulcanizing. Our students make good because they can do superior work with the Anderson machine and method and do it at one-tenth the cost required by all other vulcanizers. Highly satisfied customers and large profits mean a paying business. Not only are we able to convince you of this, but we invite you to compare the Anderson make and method with others.

We have installed Anderson schools of vulcanizing in 30 states for teaching the Anderson method of vulcanizing. The course requires 5 to 10 days and costs \$35. If you buy an Anderson vulcanizer we return your \$35 and pay you \$5 per day expense while learning.

Our reputation is valuable. We expect Anderson vulcanizers to do work which will outlast the rest of the tire. We expect Anderson students to succeed in a business way. Their success is our success. Therefore we do not sell an Anderson vulcanizer to anyone who has not received our course of instructions. Don't miss this opportunity. Write today for full particulars and address of Anderson school nearest to you.

ANDERSON STEAM VULCANIZER COMPANY, 25 Williams Building,

Indianapolis, Ind., U. S. A.

Print your name to avoid mistakes

GET WELL—BE YOUNG—GROW TALL



The University Discoveries is the most important health invention of the century. It remedies and regenerates the human body. It produces normal action, corrects contracted muscles, shortens ligaments, eliminates congestion, improves circulation and drainage of the body. It will increase the body's length. THE PANCREATIC CURE CO., 1515 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, O.

Sat in Solid Gold

Sat in Solid Gold

Send Us Your Name and We'll Send You a Lachnite

DON'T send a penny. Just say: "Send me a Lachnite mailed in a solid gold ring. When it comes merely deposit \$6.75 with the postman and wear the ring for 10 full days. If you, or any of your friends can tell it from a diamond, send it back and we will return your deposit. But if you decide to keep it—send us \$25.00 a month until \$15.75 has been paid. Write Today Send your name now. Tell us which of these solid gold rings you wish (ladies' or men's). We are sure to send your finger size.

Harold Lachman Co., 12 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. B107, Chicago

Akron Tires Quality Tires REDUCE TIRE COST 65%



5000 Mile Guarantee

Akron Quality Tires are made to meet the increasing demand for recreational tires which are indispensable to the maintenance of the auto industry. Their great economy to your personal advantage. To insure properly built and carefully selected goods, Akron Quality Tires. Shipped direct from factory to you.

One tube given with each tire

30x3	\$ 7.50	34x4	\$11.85
30x3 1/2	8.60	34x4 1/2	13.55
32x3 1/2	9.70	36x4 1/2	13.90
31x4	10.90	36x4 1/2	14.50
32x4	11.20	36x5	15.45
33x4	11.50	37x5	16.50



Reliner Free With Every Tire State whether straight edge or clincher desired. Send \$2 deposit for each tire ordered, balance C. O. D., subject to examination. If you send full amount with order, deduct \$5 per cent discount.

AKRON RUBBER CO.

Robey and Roosevelt

Dept. 21 CHICAGO, ILL.

Rider Agents Wanted

Delivered TO FREE

Your choice of styles, color and size in the famous line of "RANGER" bicycles, shown in full color in the big New Catalog. We pay all the freight charges from Chicago to your town.

30 Days Free Trial

allowed on all bicycles you select, actual riding test in your own town. Do not buy until you get our great new trial offer.

EASY PAYMENTS If desired, at small advance over our regular Factory-to-Rider cash prices.

TIRES, LAMPS, HORNS, pedals, single wheels and repair parts for all makes of bicycles at half usual prices. No one else can offer you such values and such terms.

SEND NO MONEY but write today for the big New Catalog. It's free.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY

Dept. D-30, Chicago

DEAFNESS

THE MEGA-EAR-PHONE

A Comfortable Invisible Ear Device

Non-Irritating - Not Metal - Not Wire - Not Rubber

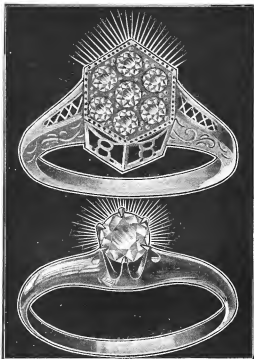
The Mega-Ear-Phone will restore hearing by taking the place of Perforated, Punctured, Ruptured or destroyed Natural Ear Drums. It permanently relieves Catarrhal Discharge, Stops Head Noises. It is a device requiring immediate results. The scientific triumph that twice nature restore hearing, when all other efforts have failed.

The Mega-Ear-Phone will HELP YOU

Write for Booklet, describing Causes of Deafness, How and Why the Mega-Ear-Phone restores hearing.

THE MEGA-EAR-PHONE CO., Inc.

Dept. A, Suite 722 Perry Bldg., 16th & Chestnut Sts., Phila., Pa.



Diamond Bargains

Just Released

Unusual conditions force us to offer many great bargains in diamonds. Through owners failure to pay money loaned, we are offering values to the public so low that no retailer can match them even at 40 per cent more. Send the coupon at once for our great bargain bulletin free.

Send Coupon Now for Great Diamond Loan Bulletin — Free

Send the coupon right away for our splendid bargain bulletin of marvelous diamond values. We have loaned money on valuable diamonds for more than one-third of a century. See for yourself how much cheaper you can buy from us. Send coupon today. Don't wait.

Send your name only for the latest bargain bulletin. Lasts newest bargains in diamonds. Fresh from the press. Great values just released. But only a few. Write in now before you are too late. Hurry.

L. Goldman's Sons
Goldman Building
Dept. B145
Kansas City, Mo.

L. Goldman's Sons
Goldman Building
Dept. B145
Kansas City, Mo.

Please send me at once without any obligation to me your catalog and latest Diamond Loan Bulletin.

Name.....

Address.....

R. F. D.....

City..... State.....

Get The JOY Out OF LIFE



What's the good of living at all, if life is just one miserable day after another, full of discomfort and failure, often of actual suffering? You can't enjoy life, or make a success of anything, while you are undeveloped, weak, ailing; a sly, grouch whom nobody wants to help along or even have around. When you wake up in the morning with a rotten taste in your mouth and a weight in your chest; with your brain wooly and your nerves all on edge, tired out before you even begin the day, YOU ARE IN A BAD WAY.

PUT YOUR HUMAN MACHINE IN ORDER

Dyspepsia, indigestion, biliousness, constipation, nervousness, and a host of other ailments are simply signs that your internal machinery is not running right—that REPAIRS ARE NEEDED—fresh blood, new and vigorous body and brain tissues, alike. I KNOW what they can and will do for YOU, through my own experience and that of thousands of my pupils, who came to me weak, ailing, discouraged, and are now strong, well, able, ambitious men and women. It makes no difference what your present condition is. Let me show you the straight, sure path back to health and strength and happiness. It's Nature's way, and there's no more doubt about the operations of Nature in the human frame than there is of the daily rising and setting of the sun.

Make Yourself Fit

STRONGFORT You can do it, if you will only make up your mind to get out of the way of putting the master God "naughty to-morrow" and begin at once to Build Up yourself. Nature has implanted in every human organism a wonderful revivifying, revitalizing force, which she will exert to the utmost when you learn her methods and observe her laws. Patent medicines won't put you right. Druggists' dope won't do you any good.

Let Me Show You Nature's Way

I have spent my life studying Nature's methods of building up and revitalizing worn-out, broken-down humanity. Her laws are fixed, immutable, absolute, operating for every individual alike. I KNOW what they can and will do for YOU, through my own experience and that of thousands of my pupils, who came to me weak, ailing, discouraged, and are now strong, well, able, ambitious men and women. It makes no difference what your present condition is. Let me show you the straight, sure path back to health and strength and happiness. It's Nature's way, and there's no more doubt about the operations of Nature in the human frame than there is of the daily rising and setting of the sun.

Send for My Free Book

It will tell you all about Strongfortism, the Science of gaining and maintaining vitality and vigor in Nature's way—NOT through any iron-clad courses of muscle-thriving exercises, starvation diets or any other fanciful fads—but by Living Life as Nature meant it to be lived, and thereby getting the greatest enjoyment out of it. Write now for a copy of "Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy." Don't stop off sending for it. IT'S FREE, but it's worth good money to you, as you will see when you have read it. Fill out the coupon below and enclose it with three 2c stamps to cover packing and postage and I will mail you a special letter with the book on the subject you are most interested in.

LIONEL STRONGFORT *Physicist and Health Specialist*
1343 Strongfort Institute Newark, N. J.

— CUT OUT AND MAIL THIS COUPON —

Mr. Lionel Strongfort, Newark, N. J.

Dear Strongfort: Please send me your book, "Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy," for postage of which I enclose three 2c stamps to cover mailing expenses. I have marked X before the subject in which I am interested. (1343)

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
|Colds |Insomnia |Gastritis |
|Catarrh |Short Wind |Falling Hair |
|Hay Fever |Flat Feet |Weak Eyes |
|Asthma |Stomach Disorders |Heartweakness |
|Obesity |Constipation |Poor Circulation |
|Headache |Biliousness |Skin Disorders |
|Thinness |Torpid Liver |Dependancy |
|Rupture |Indigestion |Round Shoulders |
|Lumbago |Nervousness |Lung Troubles |
|Neuritis |Poor Memory |Increased Height |
|Neuralgia |Rheumatism |Stoop Shoulders |
|Flat Chest |Bad Habits |Muscular Development |
|Deformity (describe) |Weakness | |

NAME.....

AGE.....OCCUPATION.....

STREET.....

CITY.....STATE.....

THE ARGOSY

Vol. CXXIII

SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1920

No. 1



The Progress of J. Bunyan by Stephen Chalmers

Author of "The Bronze Helmet," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE SORCERESS.

IT was very plain to all Naseby village that Cromwell's victory in Parliament for the reorganization of the army upon what he called the new model was not yet in force. Behind the Sign of the Three Blue Angels the troopers of his personal command were making free with the ale, perhaps realizing that on the morrow such carnal indulgences as drinking, swearing, and secular singing would be out of order.

Yet even in their cups the deeper spirit of my comrades in arms was manifest. From within the tavern roared a great voice, the personality behind which I recognized with a chuckle. It was Hobgoblin Jack, for a wager!

Another voice, vainly trying to get in a word of counter-argument, was undoubtedly that of Eli Okey, who this day was made a sergeant and was doubtless paying the shot for the last time and in honor of his promotion from the ranks.

"Ye reason not half so strong as ye roar!" Okey was expostulating. "'Tis thy

tempestuous voice frights a man to agree for peace' sake. But answer me this: Why, if the Lord be all-powerful—why, I axes, do He permit the devil to *continue* in evil works?"

"Why? *Why!*" roared Hobgoblin, and I could almost see, as I could hear, the way he banged his pewter pot on the board. "Why do the Lord send thunder and lightning and tempest and earthquake and plague and fire? Else we should not love comfort, ease from aches, and the good sunshine! Why send boils and sickness and death? Else how should we love blessed life?"

"Why permit the devil to exist, you axes? Okey, th' art a bullock with an ass's bray—sergeant though ye be—and I say it now, for without that door I may not, having respect to thy new rank. Thy speech answers itself.

"'Tis the Devil—whose powers are limited by Heaven's permission—makes thy question. 'Tis Heaven moves my tongue to make answer. Evil exists—is permitted to exist—only that good may spring from it, and in beauteous contrast to sane men's

eyes, even as from mud springs the lily, from dung the sweet-smelling rose!"

I walked on, laughing. It was so like Hobgoblin Jack. If he could not convince Okey with words, presently he would try blows, and he would then spend some further hours in the guardhouse from which I knew he had lately been released. His last offense had lain in waking up the camp in middle night to relate a strange dream of being in hell, which he interpreted as a warning of Heaven to be conveyed through him to his fellow-troopers.

Presently, however, I forgot Hobgoblin in a continued consideration of my own affairs. I was not unconscious of the pleasant glances of the Naseby lasses as I strolled, invitingly alone, through their village, a not unhandsome lad, perhaps, in the cuirass and jackboots of a roundhead trooper. But I was in no mood for dalliance, my dress and my solitariness being less romantic (to me) than tragic just then.

For it was indeed tragic in a way that I, Hallam Brooke, son of the late Hallam Brooke, Esquire, of Brooke Manor in Somersetshire, should be so accoutered. My father, and his father's father, were stanch royalists. But my father was a man true to his convictions when once he formed any, and for expressing some of these he incurred the displeasure of King Charles; which situation was not mended when, convictions put in practice, he joined the cause of Parliament, fought at Marston Moor, and there fell.

My mother died a few months later—of a broken heart, I feel sure—and I, alone in the world and penniless—for Brooke Manor was at this time quartering royalists, no doubt—took my father's sword and followed my father's example.

So much and enough about myself, for this tale is about another. I was at this time only a youthful horse-trooper with Cromwell's division of Fairfax's army; not yet baptized in battle, although the morrow promised great things, the royalist forces being encamped but a few miles to the northwest, near Sibbertoft, and preparing for that battle by the outcome of which one cause or the other was like to fall.

My reflective meanderings had taken me

to the end of the village street, where it melted into the green. At the edge of this open place was an old well surrounded by a stone parapet and within a few yards of the duck-pond. It was while I leaned on the coping watching a tame trout which some one had placed in the well that I awoke to another kind of roaring from the street behind me.

Turning, I beheld a spectacle which, common enough by hearsay in these times, yet happened to be a new thing to my eyes.

Down the street toward the village green and the pond came a crowd of Naseby villagers pressing in a sort of new-moon group about a woman who carried a lighted candle in her left hand. The crowd, led by a fairly well-dressed, somewhat scholarly-appearing person with a smug face, yelled and hooted, and occasionally hurled clods at the woman with the candle.

Instantly I surmised what was to do, and my suspicion was confirmed by the common shout of the mob.

"Witch! Sorceress! To the pool with her! If she do not drown she be a witch! Try her by water!"

And if she did drown—what then? I looked at the face of the woman, and my blood boiled at the injustice of the procedure, be she witch or no witch.

Mark ye, I had no thought at the moment to interfere. I had been brought up in the fear of witchcraft, but I had always thought of a beldame as something wizened and dreadful to behold, something that ought to be destroyed, like a snake or other creature of wicked intent.

But this woman? A sorceress! She was young, perhaps not as old as myself; and I was barely nineteen. Her hair, all golden in the June sunshine, hung loose far below her waist. Her face was very beautiful despite its pallor; and it was calm despite her peril.

Close behind her walked a brown-haired maiden about the same age, but not so tall or lovely, and dressed like a Puritan maid of less noble station. This maid, whom I was yet to know well as Ruth Prynne, was apparently not under accusation, but was yet in loyal sympathy with her fair mistress.

Then, as the strange, tragic group came

closer where I stood by the well parapet, my attention was distracted to the smug, sleek person whose attire suggested the dissident preacher. I saw him come to the lady's side and whisper something in her ear.

That it was no spiritual consolation was clear from the crimson wave of outraged modesty which stained the lady's pallor. The look she flashed upon the man would have made any decent mortal wish the ground might swallow him there and then. But he only drew back a pace or two with a shrug and a sleek smile which seemed to say:

"Very well. But I think you will change your tune presently, sweet mistress!"

I was deeply impressed by the dignity and beauty of the woman; touched also by her calm resignation. But, as I have said, I had no thought to interfere until—

A stone, flung from the rear of the mob, glanced off her shapely arm, which was bare to the elbow. I saw a stain of red spread on that arm's smooth whiteness, and that same red seemed to fill my eyes all at once. My worst failing, a naturally prejudiced mother once told me, is a blind violence of temper. It seized upon me now.

The impulse was hardly born before I found myself blocking the progress of that procession, and in my right hand was my naked sword—the sword of my father, a man who was wont to think for himself, and who had taught me to do the like.

"Halt!" I cried; and for some reason the mob obeyed like trained soldiery.

I felt the lady's eyes rest upon me, and something in them armed me with the might of right. The face of her companion, the Puritan maid, lit up with a great hope which added not a little to my encouragement; had I needed any more. I addressed myself to the sleek person in the preacher garb, for he undoubtedly was the leader in this matter.

"First—thy name, station and authority!" I required, as if my own were beyond question.

"My name, young sir," said the preacher in bland tones, "is Jonas Slythey. I am a preacher of the Holy Gospel. And that ye will stay not Heaven's retribution

with yon lethal weapon I am confident from the russet coat beneath thy Puritan armor."

"Be not so sure!" I retorted, resenting his suave manner in the face of such serious doing. "How hath this lady offended?"

"This woman," said Master Slythey, "is Mistress Joyce Eveleigh, a rank royalist and a witch. Not alone hath she harbored royalist spies in her house, but in that same dwelling she does maintain a private altar whereat she dispenses black magic to blight corn, produce sickness, lame the Parliament's troop-horses, and raise storms at sea.

"Further," he went on glibly, "in one instance, duly to be cited an ye will, pretending to visit the sick in all charity, she made signs and incantations from which one woman of Naseby did turn black and die—the which, as one so young and experienced must know, is punishable under the law by death!"

I was for the moment completely unhorsed. She—so young, so fair—a devil-woman! All I could say was all I felt.

"I do not believe it! Mistress," I added, turning to the lady, "I challenge you to speak truth. By your answer do I stand or fall, fight or retire."

Then she spoke, and her voice was fitly part of her—soft, proud, compelling as her beauty.

"Sir, it is true that in my house there is an altar. It has been there a hundred years to the glory of God, to Whom it comforts me to pray since my father fell at Marston Moor, fighting on the side of the king, whose loyal subject I truly am."

So! She, too, lost siren on that bloody field; hers on the king's side; mine on the other. It might be, the grim thought flashed, that her father slew mine, or mine hers. Oddly enough, the possibility only added flame to my sympathy. We were both victims of that mad intolerance which, more than any other cause, was soaking English soil with English blood.

"But the signs—the incantations?" I cried, remembering my father's injunction: "Fight for conviction, but first be convinced."

Her eyes met mine, and she smiled. It was a smile which somehow conveyed a

compliment to my intelligence over the mob's.

"As to that," she said, a little wearily, "I did visit the weary and heavy-laden. They suffered from war as I do, though differently. For the woman who was dying I prayed, making the sign of the cross, as my dead mother taught me in childhood. It was in that moment the poor woman breathed her last."

In a flash it was all clear to me. I looked at Master Slythey, and my sword burned to flesh itself in his sleek body. The mob was not to blame. It followed its leader, glad, no doubt, of an opportunity to attest its horror of all ritual, if not actual witchcraft.

It was Master Slythey's work first and last. This woman was as pure in heart as a holy angel. It was this spiritual purity of soul and purpose which had been her undoing. Slythey's motive I could not guess, although sure it was more than mere zeal of Puritanism.

"Release the lady, and disperse yourselves!" I commanded the mob.

But Master Slythey held them by merely lifting his hand. To me he said, with a kind of lofty condescension:

"Upon what authority, young sir?"

"The authority of a true man!" said I, as bold as a gray-haired veteran. "If authority be in question, by what sort do you propose to drown even a witch without trial, as the law of England requires?"

Knowing that I had the right of it in this—although the mob was ignorant of the fine point—Master Slythey bit his lip. But feeling he had the rabble on his side, he pretended to have reached the end of his patience with me.

"Stand aside!" he suddenly shrieked, his face purpling with rage. "Stand aside, upstart boy, or my fellows shall be compelled to use force!"

"As to that—" I began, making a pass with my sword and at the same time signalling the two women, who quickly got between me and the well parapet at my back.

For a moment the crowd was checked by surprise. But then a low growl swelled into a roar. Before I could finish the chal-

lenge I had begun to word they were upon me tooth and nail.

I had no desire to kill, or even wound any of these poor yokels. Slythey I would have spitted with a will had he not urged his dogs upon me from the safe vantage he quickly took on their flank.

The mob kept clear of my sword-point and had the advantage of being able to pelt me with sticks, stones, and turf clods without danger to themselves. Behind me the women cowered against the well parapet.

All at once I heard a cry of pain from the maid, Ruth Prynn. Then I realized that if the women were to escape further injury from flying missiles I must charge and try to disperse the mob.

Charge I did! But even as I leaped among my assailants a stone struck me squarely between the eyes, half stunning me. I staggered back, dazed, and would have fallen, but the pain of the cut on my brow revived me, and with that old blindness of fury I sprang at them again, laying about me with the flat of my heavy sword; for I still had mind that these were Englishmen and misled only by the villain who had roused them to this grievous injustice.

During the next thirty seconds it fared ill with me. The blood from the cut trickled into my eyes and blinded me. I could not see the enemy which mauled me from all sides. I could have presented no heroic spectacle to the two women whose champion I had elected myself. I had lost my steel morion in the first moments of the fray, and now a stout blow across my unshielded skull sent me reeling back on my heels.

My back collided with the stone parapet of the well and my legs gave way under me. I was barely conscious of a pair of arms about me, and a woman's voice raised in shaming protest and indignation. That voice shamed me more, perhaps, than it did the mob. The lady was pleading for her champion.

I pulled myself together, staggered to my feet, and roughly cast her protecting arms from me. Now I had no more thought for mercy. There was a point to my sword, and an edge. Rage and the desire to kill

were all that possessed me as I dashed the blood from my eyes and prepared to renew battle!

CHAPTER II.

ENTER THE GREAT INSTRUMENT.

HOW it would have fared with me I surmised only too well. But all at once a new voice was added to the uproar.

The mob split in two. Through a swiftly formed lane plunged the figure of a six-foot, big-boned, red-haired, red-faced trooper who announced his arrival with a succession of mighty roars like the bel-lowing of an enraged bull.

"Avaunt, ye devils!" he thundered, whirling a great sword about his head. "Get ye behind me, minions of Satan! By Gog, Magog, and the Archangel Gabriel, I'll spit ye all like pheasants on one skewer if ye come within reach!"

Whether the mob feared there were more troopers behind this red-haired thunderbolt, certainly all fell back, Master Slythey being the first to make retreat. But before he had gone six steps the big-boned trooper sheathed his sword, sprang after the preacher, seized him by the collar, and dragged him back to the well parapet where I leaned, not sure whether I was quite alive or on the point of death. Through a red haze I witnessed the next development of the untoward business.

Against the parapet Hobgoblin Jack—for there was no mistaking that roaring voice—jammed the sleek Master Slythey, while the two women held me up from falling, and one of them—Mistress Joyce, I believed and hoped—wiped the blood from my face.

"Ha, Master Turncoat!" bellowed Hobgoblin, shaking his man in his mighty grip. "So 'tis thee, painted hypocrite! I thought I knew thee. Th'art that same Jonas Slythey of my own village of Elstow in Bedford; that same shedskin lizard who served as an officer of royalists at Edgehill, and was expelled from their company for sinfulness e'en *they* could not brook!"

Master Slythey, his eyes popping from his head, inarticulately gurgled. Again the

choking grip shook him so that his brains must have rattled like peas in a dry pod.

"Master Jonas Slythey—*ha?* Ye do not deny it—*ha?* That same slithering Slythey who came back to Elstow and set up as a doctor of medicines, but could not forswear his old habits—drinking and gambling and worse—and was turned out by the righteous fathers?"

"By Gog, Magog, and the Archangel Gabriel! And now Master Slythey turns up in Naseby with his coat of many colors turned to godly hue! Setting up to doctor souls and condemn this to the everlasting pit and that to the ducking-pond! *Thou* that art thyself destined to sulphur, brimstone, and the lake of burning pitch!"

And with this the brawny, red-haired trooper, still holding Master Slythey by the throat with his left hand, seized him by the seat of his breeches with his right, lifted the preacher clean above his head and hurled him into a figurative lake of burning pitch—the duck-pond behind the well!

The mob which had followed Slythey, as black sheep their shepherd, now began to laugh at the preacher's sudden discomfiture. Slythey could swim a little, and managed to extricate himself from deep water, but he feared to come to land while yet our new champion held the ground. The sleek one presented a ludicrous spectacle, sitting up to his chin in the muddied water, which plastered his hair over his eyes. And then the real rescuer of the ladies and their would-be champion did a most unexpected thing. Regardless of his victim in the pond, he turned upon the mob and made an amazing speech, the main burden of which was that he, Hobgoblin Jack, was a very wicked person!

"My name," he roared, as if he challenged contradiction, "my name is Master Badman! I am an offshoot of the very devil himself. I am a drunkard, a liar, a gambler, and a swearer of vile words. I glory in all carnal sinfulness!"

"You laugh! You deny it? Be not deceived in yourselves, or me. That I wear a Puritan soldier's armor is but proof that I am a painted hypocrite! I am steeped in wickedness and sloth!"

"*You—*" he broke off, turning to the

unhappy Slythey in the duck-pond. "Pray for me if ye ha' any powers of heavenly persuasion left dry. For I am a sinner, damned at birth, predestined to hell, and lost to all grace. And to prove it—"

And he capped this amazing outburst with a stream of utterly needless, senseless profanity that made Mistress Joyce blush red and cover her ears, and Mistress Prynnne cry out:

"Oh, Jack! Jack! I prithee, ha' done!"

I was astonished that the maid should know him, as clearly she did. But Hobgoblin's surprise was even greater when he turned and discovered the maid's own identity. He faced her, staring open-mouthed. Then he clamped his heels together, brought up his hand to his head, and saluted her as if she had been Old Noll himself.

For some reason the fickle mob cheered. At that, and as I seemed now able to stand alone, Mistress Joyce bowed to me and to Hobgoblin, laid a hand on the Puritan maid's arm, and moved away.

But there were still malcontents in the mob. Perhaps they resented being deprived of the greater sensation of the affair—the ducking of a suspected witch. Perhaps they were emboldened once more by the nonappearance of the troopers they had supposed behind Hobgoblin and his bold front. Anyway, as the two women made to escape, the growl began again.

Instantly Hobgoblin whipped out the sword he had sheathed when he rushed to seize Slythey. Over the heads of the two women he raised it. I, who had not acquitted myself with any too great honor as a hero, quickly saw and seized my chance of redeeming.

Picking up my own sword from the ground where it had fallen from my hand, I sprang to the other side of Mistress Joyce and Ruth Prynnne, and brought my blade to bear across the red-haired trooper's, high over the heads of our fair ladies.

And I was conscious in that moment of a brotherhood of arms established between Hobgoblin Jack and myself—conscious of it in the thrill of that contact of steel over the heads of these two women.

Under this cover of steel they walked, and we walked with them, Hobgoblin in particular eying the following crowd with a menacing scowl.

But the crowd did not follow us any great distance.

It thinned out gradually, and scattered, for the most part ashamed, for the most part friendly to us in the end. Master Slythey, I suppose, emerged from the duck-pond after the enemy had departed with all the banners of victory.

We escorted the ladies to the gates of a fine country manor set in spacious gardens a little to the north of Naseby village. At the gates Mistress Joyce turned and, bowing graciously, said quietly:

"Gentlemen, I thank you."

That was all, except that the Puritan maid favored Hobgoblin with a demure but approving smile. The red-haired orator, whose tongue was never still for long, offered Mistress Joyce Eveleigh a bit of advice.

"Fair mistress," said he, "if indeed ye be a supporter of the wrong side, as I judge ye be, then for your better welfare I would urge ye make haste to some refuge behind the king's lines. He lies this night nigh Sibbertoft."

"And Mistress Prynnne," he added to the Puritan maid, "as ye do seem to remember me as the ungodly youth of Elstow in Bedford, happen also ye ha' mind o' my trade."

"If so be ye have any pots, pans or kettles in need o' tinkering, bear it well in mind that Jack Bunyan's hand ha' lost none o' its old cunning."

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT ANGELS AND STEWPANS.

OUR camp was on the outskirts of Naseby village. There Lord Fairfax had planted it on his march north from Oxford to check the victories of Charles, which included the taking of Leicester and the raising of the blockade of Chester.

On our way back from the gates of Eveleigh Manor my odd friend, Hobgoblin Jack, seemed to have forgotten my exis-

tence. He was deeply preoccupied, muttering to himself, and occasionally throwing out a word or a gesture seemingly addressed to some invisible third person.

As a reminder of my presence I cleared my throat and thanked him for his timely aid on the village green. At my address he stopped short in his rather rapid pacing forward, seeming greatly surprised, and stared at me as upon a precipitate stranger. But then he recognized me and said abruptly:

"Youth—I know not thy name nor station, save as by thy dress th'art a trooper of Noll's division, a brother-in-arms for righteousness. But a great question burdens my mind. Have ye any faith in the ways of Providence?"

"I warrant ye!" I assured him.

He sighed. "Ah!" said he. "If I could have faith. But I am not as some—a dolt, swallowing camels with an open mouth. In me an angel and a devil do furiously rage together. Now 'tis the angel is on top; now 'tis the devil has the thrapple-hold. And 'tis for Jack Bunyan they wrestle."

"Strange!" I murmured, amazed and amused.

"Very strange. Very strange," Hobgoblin agreed. "Yet what is strange about it, young sir? Maybe I be more hopelessly stewed in sin than the ordinary, with less hope for salvation. Yet none of us are born in grace. We are all predestined to hell. Only by selection are we admitted to the elect."

"But the infinite mercy—" I began; but he went on, unheeding me, as if, indeed, he were talking for his own benefit.

"There was a time, sweet youth"—he was no older than I, yet talked as if he were at least my grandsire—"there was a time when I believed that by righteous living I might escape this dark destiny. Blind youth, would ye think it to look at me?"

He stopped again, gripped me by the arm, and forced me to study his red, rugged, almost comically grave face.

"Would ye believe, to look at me, that I have read Scripture till my head ached? Aye, that I have!"

I laughed—could not help it. A pained

look entered his eyes. Then he grew angry at what he took to be my incredulity. Out of his right jackboot he whipped something which he held up under my very nose.

"Does *that* prove it?" he roared.

The thing in his hand was a small, well-worn, Geneva Bible.

"'Twould seem ye carry it ever," I said.

"I do," said he solemnly, sticking the Bible back in the wide top of his boot. Then he hooked an arm in mine and proceeded to walk me at a furious gait toward the camp, talking all the while in keeping with our pace.

"Tell no man what I reveal to thee, young sir. The time is not ripe; the meaning is not clear. But what think ye it means? Who am I that an angel and a devil should wrestle night and day for possession of my soul? Who am I that should be visited by revelations—visions of angels and archangels and cherubim and seraphim and all the hosts of heaven with harps and lutes and—aye! Beautiful visions, lad; beautiful visions! Milk and honey to the soul." But then—

"Ah, but then! Again I am plunged into the pit—and more visions—hobgoblins chained to stakes, being roasted and boiled in the flaming abyss. And mark ye, Master Innocent, all those damned hobgoblins ha' the face o' Jack Bunyan, so that I suffer the agonies of 'em all, waking up in a hot sweat, roused from the dream by my own anguished howling!"

As the torrent of words poured from his lips his stride increased with his mental excitement, so that I was half-dragged into a half-trot to keep up with him, which the powerful arm cleeking mine made sure that I would.

"What does it mean, lad? Is it that I am to choose before it is too late? But what must I do to be saved? Mark ye, I ha' striven time and again to be righteous; but whether 'tis that Heaven reads in my heart, finding there not a true desire for righteousness but merely the selfish wish to escape the sulfur pit—for this I ha' been refused nomination to the elect."

"Of late," he went on moodily; "of late I ha' been happier. Why, lad, why? I shame to tell it. Convinced of predesti-

nation to destruction, I ha' surrendered to fate, and am wont to draw from all carnal delights what bitter-sweet they may bring to this loathly flesh. Happier? Aye—even as the swine is happier in its wallow!"

To say that I was amazed by this strange outburst from this man, who was almost a stranger to me, would be expressing only half my confusion.

"I do not understand you," I gasped, out of breath.

"I do not understand myself!" he retorted. "But there is a glimmer of a light at times. Thus! Often I am assailed by a half-belief—in all modesty, mark ye—in all modesty—that the most high betimes turns an eye upon poor Jack Bunyan. Time and again Heaven has most miraculously guided me through the swamp of sin where the devil tried to lure me with corpse-candles disguised in tavern-lights—saved me in the valley of death itself.

"Once, boy, I fell into a creek, and the Hand of the Lord, through His instrument, Thomas Thorp, snatched me out by the scruff of my neck. Once I picked up a poisonous adder, and—ye will hardly believe this—it did not bite me! And hearken further, lad. At Leicester 'twas. I was on sentry guard. The devil prompted me to thirst for a pot of ale. Leaving one Jonathan Shotwell in my place, the hog went to his swill. When I came back Jonathan lay on his musket, shot between the eyes with the bullet meant for Jack Bunyan!"

As he reached this tragic climax Hobgoblin came to a sharp halt that nigh pulled my arm from its socket. Wagging a ponderous finger in my face, he whispered tensely:

"Why, lad? Tell me that—*why*? Was it the devil saved his minion with that pot of ale? Or was it high heaven passed the word: 'Shift that lad, Bunyan. I ha' need o' that sinner. Place another in his stead.'"

"'Tis a strange matter," was all I could say.

"Am I right?" he asked, with almost ludicrous anxiety. "Or do I but fancy these things?"

"There would seem to be some serious

purpose behind it all," said I, impressed despite a desire to laugh.

Seeming relieved, he led me on again, walking now at an easier pace, but still rambling on about strange, unearthly matters and speculations.

His eccentricity astounded me. More astounding were his earnestness, his gravity, his sincere belief in his own theories. Not listening to half of what he further said, I fell to thinking of the man himself. As I say, he was not over twenty, but a full-grown man in body, with great shoulders, long arms, heavy feet, and in general a massive frame which his rugged, homely face and dull red hair perfectly suited. Apparently he had possessed a terrific imagination.

But I could not read the riddle of him. He was a mass of contradictions. The quiver of fear in his voice as he related his dream experiences in the infernal regions was oddly unlike the physically brave man who cowed that mob on the village green. His profanity, then and now—and I have purposely left out the heavy sprinkling of it in all his speech—struck me as being affected, like that of a growing lad anxious to prove himself a very wicked *man*. His self-condemnation, too, was something for which I could see no basis, save his own statements about gambling and drinking. I suspected that he exaggerated mouth-wagers into heavy dicing, pint-pots into kegs.

In short, without knowing more about the man, I was somehow convinced that Hobgoblin Jack Bunyan was his own chief accuser; that behind all his self-asserted wickedness there was a great heart bleeding with a sense of personal unworthiness, a great brain driving itself mad with those very questions of religion which tore all England asunder at the time.

But in the end I gathered this much—and the ponderous prologue to the trivial matter set me to laughing again: he believed that the Hand of God had personally directed him to the saving of that maiden on the village green, or that Providence had appointed her a "warning angel" to lead him from his "sodden, sinful ways."

"An angel, indeed!" I said, thinking of the beautiful, saintly lady who prayed before that lone altar in Eveleigh Manor.

"Aye, but ye know not all the miracle," said he. "Years ago, when I was but a thoughtless youth, playing rebecks and jiggling on the Lord's Day, tying cats and howlets in the belfry of a Sunday morning, and muffling the school-bell with wool—one morning years ago, in Elstow, I was setting a cat and a dog to fight, wagging on the cat, and roaring vile language as I urged her to claw the —'s eyes out, when the door of a small cottage opened and she appeared—the angel!"

"Indeed she is an angel," I repeated. "I blame you not the error."

"Error!" he roared furiously. "Hold thy tongue, dolt! No carnal beauty was this, but in truth an angel—the angel of the Lord!"

I merely bowed assent to his quaint delusion, but exploded when he went on—

"In her right hand she held a stewpan."

Several minutes passed before I made my peace with him and he could proceed.

"In her right hand she held a stewpan," he repeated gravely, but with a severe eye upon me. "'Jack Bunyan,' says she, 'it would serve thy soul better if ye tinkered the hole in this stewpan and ceased storing up the evil commissions of thy tongue against the Day of Judgment.'"

This incident, he went on, had a profound effect upon his mind. He felt it to be the direct interposition of that Providence which was repeatedly demonstrating a merciful inclination toward Master Wayward.

"For a time," said he in a humble voice, "I gave up playing the rebeck, even on week-days, forswore gambling, ale, dog-fights, and hockey on Sundays. I even gave up my job as bell-ringer of the Elstow Episcopal, because I knew in my secret heart that it was more carnal joy for Jack Bunyan than for the glory of the Lord.

"I turned my thoughts to the means of grace, read and reread the Book till my brains were addled with Scripture, and sat at the feet of my ministering angel, that

poor orphan girl, mending her stewpans and kettles while she read to me out of a little book she gave me to keep when I left to become a trooper—"The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven," which, alas, I have scarce looked at since; for in the company of these men of blood I again fell into the swamp of sin.

"But now," he concluded, as we came within sight of the parliamentary army's camp, "behold the mercy of the Lord! Again the angel appears, a light in my dark, and I am spewed out of a sodden alehouse into her bright presence.

"Tell me, sweet youth: is it the finger of Providence, or only that which Master Skeptic calls chance?"

During all this rigmarole I had, of course, pictured Mistress Joyce Eveleigh as the angel, although I found it hard to reconcile her dignity with stewpans. Still, her quiet simplicity, her visiting of the poor and sick—

But Hobgoblin presently informed me that *his* angel was Ruth Prynne, who at the death of her father had left Elstow and apparently found service with Mistress Eveleigh. Having a thought to closer acquaintance with my own angel, I ventured to suggest to Hobgoblin that he would surely be flying in the face of Providence if he did not follow his trade; that indeed it might be well if he presented himself at the kitchen door of Eveleigh Manor on the morrow, and see if the Lord had not decreed a few leaky vessels overnight.

"By Gog and Magog!" exclaimed Jack Bunyan; "th'art an inventious youth! On the morrow I shall even borrow a brand and solder and hie me as ye say."

I regretted that I was not a thinker myself, but—well, Tinker Bunyan might have need of an apprentice!

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROARING LION.

THERE was a loud uproar in camp as we entered it; bursts of cheering and roars of enthusiasm for Oliver Cromwell, who had just arrived from London Town on the heels of the news of his victory over

Parliament there. The days of Manchester and Essex and their vacillating policy were over. It was war to the death against the king. Fairfax was confirmed as commander-in-chief, and Cromwell was his second, although to the army and the people the second was first.

With Charles and his army arrayed some miles to the northwest, and Fairfax and Cromwell already closeted in conference, it was clear that our planned visit to the kitchen door of Eveleigh Manor was not like to take place on the morrow. More probably we would be hurled into the lists of a harsher encounter. Cromwell would undoubtedly strike without delay (as he did), and on the field of Naseby the cause of Parliament or the crown of Charles would stand or fall.

And, sure enough, next day I received my baptism in fire and blood. The battle of Naseby was fought on that June day. My sword was red ere sundown, and I was conscious that I had acquitted myself not ill as my father's son and a trooper of Old Noll's division.

I shall not describe the battle. I doubt if I could, save in a general way, and as Hobgoblin Jack and I were involved in it. Of the details I knew little until some time afterward; only that at the beginning of the great battle which so changed the face of English history our center and our left were driven back, almost overwhelmed by the king's infantry and Prince Rupert's cavalry.

But we Ironsides on the right routed Langdale's horse. Then—and the glory of it was all Cromwell's—we fell on the victorious center of Charles, charged right through it, and descended, an unexpected thunderbolt, upon the flank of the temporarily elated Rupert.

It was a splendid coup of Old Noll, and a most disastrous surprise to the dashing prince, for Rupert and his horse, having smashed our center and left with the aid of the king's infantry, were pursuing our routed forces back toward Naseby when the unexpected avalanche of hoofs and steel swept down upon them through the scattered mêlée of the king's center.

But Cromwell divided his troopers, or-

dering several companies, part of my own included, to complete the rout of Langdale and, if possible, capture the king, who was supposed to be flying northwest with the remnants of his center.

The rest of the Ironsides pursued Rupert's horse, who had scarce begun to realize that the rainbow of their victory was taking on the hue of terrible defeat. In fact, the royalists in the forefront of the pursuit of our equally shattered center and left were as yet unaware that their retreat was not only blocked by Cromwell, but that the Ironsides were thundering down at their heels.

I would give much to have been (as Hobgoblin was) one of the company which, descending upon the Sign of the Three Blue Angels, found and captured a number of Rupert's officers as they were in the act of toasting their victory!

I was then with the company to the northwest, hacking and hewing at the flanks and rear of the flying royalists, and scouring hither and thither in search of the king himself.

Of Hobgoblin I saw little during the entire engagement, and as I say, he went with the detachment pursuing Rupert. But the little I did see of him sticks in mind as a very vivid picture.

It is the picture of a red-haired demon mounted on a ponderous, shaggy-footed plow-horse which, with its rider who roared like a cataract and whirled a red sword about his head, spread terror and havoc in the early stages of the battle. He seemed to be here, there, all over the field at once, towering half a head over friend and enemy alike wherever the battle was thickest and fiercest. And through the roaring of the cataract voice sounded the most astounding mixture of profanity and Scriptural quotation men's ears ever heard, even in moments of great stress.

Our own captain, Giles Bombard, was a stern Puritan in morals as well as fight. It was he, and not Cromwell, who said on Naseby field that "the Lord gave the enemy as stubble to our swords." But valorous warrior as Captain Bombard was, his soul was shaken by the wicked language that streamed like infernal blasts

from the lips of Trooper John Bunyan in the battle. When Hobgoblin declared in trumpet voice, by way of encouraging his fellow Ironsides, that he himself was Gog, Magog, and the Archangel Gabriel, Captain Giles cried out in protest:

"Silence, blasphemer!" he shouted, even as he split a cavalier to the teeth. "Afore Heaven, ye imperil victory!"

But possibly Heaven looked into the heart of Jack Bunyan and saw that his shocking language was as meaningless as the excited babbling of a boy at his game.

At the risk of modesty I repeat that I did not acquit myself ill, and I was privileged to do Hobgoblin a small service that day. I cut down a cavalier just as he was about to cleave Bunyan from behind.

Hobgoblin was otherwise engaged at the moment, and does not know to this day how near he came to the solution of all his earthly and spiritual problems. Undoubtedly he would have given me only a share of the credit as a divinely appointed instrument to save him from that cavalier, who, of course, must have been a minion on the devil's side of his affairs.

To dispose briefly of the battle of Naseby field—we won! The royalist cause was left foundering. Charles escaped us that day, and was supposed to be making all speed toward the Welsh border.

Not remembering in the excitement that our forces had split between Rupert and the king, and not having seen or *heard* Hobgoblin since early in the fight, I began to fear for my odd friend as we rode back, tired but victorious, toward Naseby. None of my comrades knew what had become of him, and the dread that he had fallen grew upon me.

Depression, resulting also from mental reaction and physical exhaustion, was not a whit lifted when over the moor ahead sounded the bells of Naseby church, pealing joyously for our triumph. Not until afterward did I think it in the least unusual for us Puritans to be celebrating thus merrily, almost secularly.

But I remembered the bells when, arrived in Naseby and encountering our own Sergeant Okey, I inquired concerning my friend, Trooper Bunyan.

"Friend?" quoth Okey. "Be he friend o' thine, my bantam? Then I fear ye chose ill company."

"How so, sergeant? How has Bunyan offended that ye speak thus slighting?"

"Bunyan—if that be the blasphemer's name—Bunyan is in jail!"

In jail! What now? Had Okey informed me that Hobgoblin was dead, cut to pieces, and each piece buried separately, I could not have been more astonished. In jail? For what?

Then I heard a strange tale, one which had me laughing again, as all things concerning Hobgoblin somehow inclined me—at this time.

It appeared that Trooper Bunyan, having fought more like a demon from the pit than a Puritan soldier, had wound up his day with his carnal devil still rampant. Forgetting his resolve about bells and righteous self-denial, he had dashed from the Sign of the Three Blue Angels after the capture of Rupert's officers, climbed the belfry of Naseby church, and rung peal after peal upon the bells until their tongues nigh cracked their bronze cheeks!

At the order of Cromwell the offender was taken, not so much for celebrating victory in this unrestrained manner as doing it without order. It was before Captain Bombard that Bunyan was marched, a prisoner in his own ranks, but still rampantly impenitent. The God-fearing Giles, recognizing the red-haired trooper who had endangered victory with language displeasing to Heaven, fined him twelvepence on the spot—Cromwell's decreed penalty for profanity.

Alas! Bunyan, like the rest of the Ironsides, had received no pay in a twelve-month, so in default he was marched to the Naseby lock-up, which had temporarily been converted into a military guardhouse.

"And there he is now, this saintly friend o' thine," concluded Sergeant Okey, "and our captain, who hath a right concern for our souls, is even with him at this moment, seeking to convince him of the error of his ways by prayer and supplication."

Even while I felt inclined to laugh at this mishap to my friend Hobgoblin, I was disturbed. It seemed a poor reward for so

brave a warrior as he had proven himself in the field, when his only fault, as it seemed to me then, was an excess of animal spirit.

My mind was made up instantly to try if I could not gain his release by informing some one in authority—Captain Bombard, for example—of the things I was privileged to know of the man, of the things I had seen him do, particularly of his chivalrous conduct in the matter of Mistress Joyce Eveleigh when she was in the hands of the mob.

"Would that I could be admitted to see Trooper Bunyan," I said to Okey, "and have a word with Captain Bombard, if he be indeed concerned for my friend's welfare."

"Lad," said the sergeant, laying a hand on my shoulder, "abstain from such ill association. Evil communications do corrupt good manners. Forget that thou hadst such a friend. Thou hast an honest face—"

"Forget a friend? Then were I unworthy of friendship!" I cried hotly; and leaving Sergeant Okey wagging his head gloomily, I set off in search of the lock-up, which I found in due course.

My Ironside cuirass, more than the statement that I had business with Captain Bombard, won me instant admission to the jail. We Ironsides were kings that day!

As I walked along the corridor lined on either side with cells, in which not a few of the prisoners were high royalist officers, I was for the moment surprised to be halted by no guard. The sentry was there, indeed, and quite visible to my eyes. He paid no heed to my intrusion, did not even see me, even when I stood at his elbow and looked in upon the scene which so riveted his attention.

The sentry was peering through the bars of a cell door at an odd picture. On the wooden board which served as bed and bench for a prisoner, sat Jack Bunyan, his face wrought into woe-begone lines. On his knees lay a small book, wide open. As it was not his Geneva Bible, I surmised it must be "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven," which Ruth had given him.

But he was not reading. His head was

sunk on his breast and his long arms dangled helplessly at his sides, his fingertips almost touching the flagged floor.

Opposite him sat Captain Giles Bombard on a low stool. The God-fearing warrior was haranguing the blasphemer and bell-ringer, whose late ribaldry had clearly given way to despair.

"Trooper Bunyan," Bombard was saying sorrowfully, "ye do deceive yourself."

"I tell ye there is no hope for me," Hobgoblin sullenly declared.

"There is hope for every sinner that repenteth," Bombard assured him.

"Aye," said Jack mournfully, "but 'tis not the penitent me that swears. 'Tis a devil that possesses me like a roaring lion. 'Twas that same evil possession which likewise rang the bells—not I."

"Then should this roaring lion be cast out," said Giles. "But think again, brother. Was it not in sooth that ye rang these bells to the glory of God, Who gave us this great victory? May He not have chosen thee His instrument for that thou wert a blasphemer in need of redemption?"

"Not so," said Hobgoblin stubbornly. "Heaven did not urge me to play 'Sweet William' on the bells!"

"Brother John," said Bombard, who wore a robe before a cuirass, "there are but two courses. First, I will pray for thee. If that avails not to dislodge thy devil, then must ye even be exorcised."

And not a little to my astonishment—and admiration—the warrior captain got down upon his knees on the stone-flagged floor and began a petition to Heaven for the salvation of Hobgoblin Jack Bunyan, while that soul-tortured trooper stared despairingly at the petitioner's bowed head.

At last Bombard said "Amen," and looked up rather expectantly at the glooming red face of the possessed.

"How is it now with thee, Brother Bunyan?" he asked hopefully.

"Nothing ha' gone out o' me," said Jack. "Evil still sits upon my stomach like a heavy meal."

"Then," said the God-fearing warrior solemnly, "only exorcism may avail. Art willing to part with the evil that is in thee?"

"Aye!" said Bunyan fervently.

"Thy consent is half the battle," said Giles. "I go to seek the exorciser."

And he came toward the cell door, where the sentry and I stared in wide-eyed awe of the proceeding.

For, mark you, while I have other ideas now on exorcism and such matter, at this time I fully believed, as did Bombard, Hobgoblin and the pop-eyed sentry, in the reality of evil possession.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXORCISM THAT FAILED.

YET I was not so sure that Jack Bunyan was really possessed of a devil. But that he believed this to be his plight was almost as bad. If the lad could only be convinced, as I was, that he was not half so black as he painted himself, his devil might lose some of its ill hue.

This I ventured to express to Captain Bombard as he came from the cell. I told him all I knew about Jack Bunyan, of his bravery, his honesty, his queer self-conviction of wickedness.

"Lad," said Giles, who between times was a most amiable and approachable worthy, "I am half of thy mind in this matter. He is a brave soldier, but if it be as ye think, then indeed is his plight more grievous, for he harbors a devil of his own willing; which is a double sin. Wherefore this devil must be taken from him. He must be saved from the burning."

"Know either of ye," he added, including the sentry in his address; "know either of ye any who hath power to exorcise devils?"

"That I do, sir," put in the sentry quickly. "There be one of whom I ha' heard, in this same village of Naseby, who is not only a godly man and an exhorter in the Gospel, but one having craft in drugs and against witchcraft and the like."

"Go fetch him!" said the captain. "Get thee gone. And you, lad," (to me) "stand guard until he returns."

As soon as we were alone together I peered through the bars at Hobgoblin. He was now immersed in the study of his little

book, seeking mayhap some pathway out of his dilemma.

"Jack," I whispered, "ha' done with this folly. Thou'rt no more possessed than ye do imagine, and a much less."

"Get thee behind me, satan!" said he in a sepulchral voice, and fell again to reading "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven."

I gave him up, and contented myself with finding interest in my temporary duty.

It was a queer place, was Naseby lock-up that day; part infirmary, part alehouse, and part casual lodging. Some of the royalist prisoners were drunk and singing; others were drunk and snoring; still others nursed and cursed minor wounds, while a few of finer sensibilities sat behind the bars with their heads in their hands, in despair of the lost cause.

But I had little time in which to observe these. The sentry presently came back in company with Captain Giles, who had met him outside the prison as he returned from his errand. Behind them walked a sleek, soft-footed person in the garb of a dissident preacher, whose face gave me a momentary start. It was Master Jonas Slythey, whom I had last seen in the duck-pond!

"The exorcist," said Bombard briefly. "A godly man, besides versed in surgery, medicines, and counter-crafts."

It was on my tongue to say that if Jonas Slythey was to be the exorciser, I feared he would not tame Jack Bunyan's devil; but curiosity stayed me when, Slythey's gaze encountering my face, he seemed not to know me again. This glow of curiosity became a flame when I saw Slythey take a swift step back from the bars through which he had peered at the person whose devil he was to exorcise.

He had recognized the red-haired fury of the village green, the same who had pitched him into the duck-pond!

What would he do? Retire? Not he! A slow smile played for a moment about his flabby, sallow face, and he turned his back upon the cell door.

"I shall not enter until all is prepared," he said softly. "'Tis needful that, first, all should be in readiness."

As the exorcist presumably knew his own business, and his word was for the time law, Captain Bombard conferred with him for a few moments, then turned to me.

"As th'art a friend of this unhappy wight ye shall enter the cell and help. Be-like we may ha' need of strong hands. Give him thy commands, physicians."

It was then that Slythey looked me straight in the face. If he recognized me he gave no word of it, although I fancied a faint glimmer in his shifty eyes.

"Fetch a brazier with lighted char in it," he commanded; "also some green sticks; likewise mustard and water and pepper, salt, catsup, and such hot stuffs."

These were procured after some delay and placed in the cell at Slythey's direction, the condiments on the stool and the glowing brazier under the far end of the bench upon which Jack Bunyan sat stolidly following his "Pathway." Master Slythey, I noticed, carefully kept his back to the barred door, himself standing in the prison alley and issuing directions over his left shoulder without more than half-turning his head.

When all was placed as commanded, Slythey, still with his back to the scene (as if the attitude were a necessary part of the strange business) ordered that the possessed person be made to lie flat on his stomach on the bench, his face over the end and directly above the brazier. Hobgoblin obeyed without a murmur, only sighing as he closed his "Pathway" and thrust the little volume into the top of his other jackboot.

Once Hobgoblin was in the required position, Slythey ordered me to place the green sticks on the hot coals of the brazier. In less than a minute a cloud of acrid smoke arose from the verdant wood and enveloped Trooper Bunyan's head.

"Open thy mouth that the evil may escape!" cried Master Slythey in a sing-song voice. "Open thine eyes that ye may see the evil one depart!"

Bunyan, I suppose, obeyed, for instantly he began to cough and weep as the reek choked and blinded him.

Not until this pass did Master Slythey

enter the cell, and he at once busied himself with other measures while Hobgoblin gulped and sputtered, flat on his belly on the bench, with his mouth open over the smoking brazier.

Swiftly Master Slythey, muttering to himself the while, mixed mustard and water in the prisoner's pewter pot, added a generous dash of pepper, a half-handful of salt, and a heavy splash of catsup.

"Drink!" he commanded the prostrate Bunyan. "This will expel all bile from thy liver and evil from thy soul. Drink!"

Giles Bombard, his face wrought with friendly concern, while mine must have betrayed a growing suspicion and rage, almost tenderly helped to raise the head of the patient Hobgoblin. My unhappy friend had scarce swallowed half of the nauseous dose before he was seized with a violent retching.

His stomach must have been of iron to retain the mixture at all. As it was, he sprang to his feet despite the protests of Slythey and Giles Bombard and fought an inward battle against sickness. While he leaned against the cell wall, gasping and gulping, tears streaming adown his smoke-grimed face, he managed to articulate:

"Nay — nay — nay! If this be — the remedy — let me — keep my — devil!"

"Silence!" cried Master Slythey in horrified tones. "Thou wilfully desirest evil? Heed him not!" turning to Captain Giles. "Down with him upon the bench. 'Tis not he, but the evil that cries through his mouth!"

It may have been that in raising his voice Master Slythey betrayed his identity to Hobgoblin's ears, for Bunyan was too blinded by tears to see. Anyway, as Giles seized hold of him again and summoned me to assist in laying my friend back upon his belly, Hobgoblin recognized his tormentor.

Giles Bombard was flung violently against the opposite wall, hurled by Bunyan's mighty arms. Then, meeting no willing obstacle in me, Hobgoblin leaped at the exorcist's throat with a bellow that must have sprung from the roaring devil which could not be cast out.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)



Comrade Easy-Mark

by Jack Bechdolt

THERE was a patent music-box in Waldo Harrison's parlor and the top of it was a highly varnished and polished golden oak, a triumph of bourgeoisie art.

Comrade Leon Minsch, who was lighting a fresh cigarette from the butt of a used one, deliberately laid the burning twist of tobacco and paper so that its glowing coal added the stench of bubbling varnish to the scent of cheap tobacco.

Zenia Kauffmann, legally and conventionally Mrs. Waldo Harrison, standing close beside him, merely smiled.

Comrade Minsch seized her about the waist and drew her to him. "You are my woman," he whispered.

"Dead certain, aren't you?" Zenia mocked him, but she let the arm remain where it was.

In those days—it was January of 1900—Zenia Kauffmann had lost that youthful, willowily slenderness that had first captured the attention of Waldo Harrison and tricked him into marrying his mother's maid of all work. But she was still a strikingly handsome young woman with hair black as coal, snapping black eyes set off obliquely by her high cheekbones and a perfect, oval face. Her lips were full and very red and her mind was a fertile field within the devil, whose particular preference is idle women, had already sowed a bountiful crop of mischief.

Like Comrade Minsch, Zenia's birthplace

was Russia and they exchanged endearments in their native tongue.

Comrade Gerta Rhinebeck peered through her thick-lensed glasses at them. She was thin, was Comrade Gerta and she entertained a tenderness for big, whiskered Leon Minsch that brewed in her a jealous acid.

"Where is your husband, Comrade Zenia?" she asked with shrill significance.

The other half dozen of the comrades, smoking, drinking beer and sprawling in Waldo Harrison's little flat paused to hear the answer.

"Who, the little bourgeois?" drawled Zenia. "At his store earning the money that buys your supper, I dare say, my dear Gerta." Zenia laughed unpleasantly. "But why do you ask? Why think of him? Do not fear that he will disturb our happiness, Comrade Gerta. Waldo Harrison, pah! Self-satisfied, money grubbing, blind. A— an easy mark!"

Leon Minsch laughed uproariously at the current slang. "Easy Mark!" he roared. He snatched up a bottle of beer from the golden-oak center-table, knocked off its neck with a skilled blow that left a splendid jagged scar in the shining varnish and held the foaming bottle aloft, dripping a puddle of slops on the Wilton rug in Waldo Harrison's parlor. "A toast to our unseen host," he proclaimed. "To Comrade Easy mark."

He drank from the broken bottle and the

other comrades joined him with noisy acclaim at his wit.

And it was then that Waldo Harrison, listening at the kitchen door, almost burst in upon them in a berserk rage, to drive forth this idle crew that defiled his home. Almost he did this—not quite.

Waldo Harrison had closed his Sixth Avenue haberdashery that bore his name and hurried home to his evening meal and the companionship of his wife. He earnestly hoped she would not be entertaining any of her strange friends. He did not like Leon Minsch nor Comrade Gerta Rhinebeck nor the other comrades. They made a great deal of noise and said wild and shocking things. He was afraid the neighbors would hear them and complain that Waldo Harrison was not quite respectable. And they seemed to delight in showing their independence of convention by marring his furniture, throwing burnt-out cigarettes everywhere and eating all this food and drinking all his beer. If Zenia must have friends, he could not see, for the life of him, why she didn't like such women as Mrs. Beppler, the butcher's wife, or Mrs. Robertson, whose husband was a buyer for Siegel's—women who like to crochet and gossip and sometimes go in a jolly party to see Viola Allen play in the "Palace of the King," or maybe Maude Adams or "Flordora."

Waldo Harrison did not understand his wife at all.

When he married his mother's maid, Zenia Kauffmann, the beautiful Russian seemed everything that a wife should be. And now, she seemed—well—

He heard the loud voices from the parlor and went stealthily down the long hall of the flat to the kitchen, anxious to avoid Zenia's friends because he did not like to be made uncomfortable by their remarks. From the ice-box he rummaged a sandwich and a bottle of beer. He ate standing by the door that opened on the party, hoping that Zenia would come past on some errand so that he could ask her to bring him his copy of "To Have and To Hold," and thus escape unnoticed to the bedroom to read and to sleep—if the noise would let him.

Standing thus, hoping, an undersized

man already graying about the temples, blinking his weak gray eyes, Harrison heard the toast to "Comrade Easy-mark," and for a moment his blood ran as hot as ever scalded the veins of those costumed heroes of fiction he liked to read about.

If only Waldo Harrison had not been halted by the sudden fear, "What would the neighbors say?" the course of several lives might have been very different.

Instead of doing what he should have done he put on his hat and coat and walked out into the night, talking aloud to himself about the terrible things he would some day do to Leon Minsch and all the others of Zenia's circle. Fourteenth Street's bright lights lured him and when he found, at the Academy that a dramatization of that very successful novel "*Quo Vadis*" was holding the boards he bought a ticket and went in. So for several hours he completely forgot himself and his troubles in the fortunes of *Lygia*, the beautiful Christian.*

When the play was over Harrison spent another hour walking Fourteenth Street, anxious to avoid any encounter with his wife's guests. He felt very lonely and very sorry for himself. Numerous single women strolled past and many smiled at him significantly. Several he wanted to speak to, to acclaim their companionship and tell them how badly the world treated him. He did not speak because the papers recently had been full of stories about "mashers" and women who assaulted them with hat-pins.

When he did get home the flat was silent. All the gas jets were burning brightly. He stood blinking in the empty, overlighted rooms, stinking of stale tobacco smoke. There were many empty bottles, and glasses were leaving sticky rings on all his shiny furniture. Dead cigarettes crumbled on the scorched rugs and lay in untidy drifts on window ledge and table.

By contrast with all this riotous disorder the silence seemed oppressive, significant, fateful.

Zenia was not in the bedroom, nor the kitchen nor bathroom. He went back, vaguely alarmed, to the parlor and finally found her note.

His first impulse, when he had mastered

the note's amazing information, was to thank God for deliverance from an even more harassing problem. Then he felt tremendously sorry for himself, and lonely; finally, as he sat holding the note, a shrunken, futile person surrounded by strange débris, flooded by brilliant gas-light, he was persuaded that he loved Zenia nobly and that she had wrecked his life.

For Zenia had definitely broken with him to accept the love of Leon Minsch.

II.

At the rear of Harrison's Sixth Avenue haberdashery was a partition marking off a space used for storage and added to this partition was a boxlike excrescence, "the office." Harrison, slumped down in his office-chair, was examining his fire insurance policies on a late afternoon of December, a year after Zenia had left his bed and board.

The door communicating with the store was closed and locked, and there was no window or hole in the opaque glass of the partition through which he could be observed. Yet he frequently glanced over his shoulder, and his eyes rolled uneasily.

Heaped untidily before him were numerous letters from wholesalers, letters that asked curtly for payment of accounts, and invariably spoke of taking legal proceedings for collection. Except for a few worthless circulars, these were about the only business letters he received any more.

But his stock and store were well insured. He gloated over the satisfactory figures, and rubbed his chin in an agony of indecision.

The business had been founded by Harrison's parents. They passed it on to him at their death—a living thing built up by patience and hard-acquired credits. Their son had conducted it with an enthusiasm that made up for most of his ignorance of good merchandising. The location was a good one. There were two small transient hotels within the block and near by an old-fashioned side-street lined with boarding-houses and residences. The life-time effort that built up the trade had left it sufficient impetus normally to last another life-time.

But for a year its proprietor had luxuri-

ated in the sensations of a man whose life was blighted by woman's perfidy. He had thoroughly convinced himself that his first infatuation for Zenia was a noble love; that since she had gone, the world held nothing for him. He reveled in showing all the outward evidences of a broken man. And a broken man is not a successful merchant.

The shop was dirty with long neglect. Its stocks were depleted, out of date, dusty. The window was still dressed as it had been a year before with flaunting gift ties, a dressing-gown, smoking-jacket, felt slippers, all wound with faded crêpe paper ribbons, hung with holly wreaths dead and brown these many months, sprinkled with imitation snow of mica flakes, and thick in a dun powdering of dust. It gave him a mighty, perverse pleasure to look into that window and that dirty shop, to fetch a great, tremulous sigh and mutter, "Dust and decay, that's what a false woman's brought me to—dust and decay."

The long-silent bell of the front door tinkled, indicative of the entrance of a visitor, possibly a customer.

Harrison, startled like a rabbit, dropped the papers he held into a drawer, slammed it shut and locked it with shaking hand. He unlocked his office door and peered into the unlighted store. It was only a woman, a little, old woman whom he recognized as an occasional buyer.

"Damn," he snarled. "Why don't that old fool keep out of here—scaring a man half to death!" He came forward scowling.

She was a queer, cheery little bundle in black, this old lady, shrunken in figure until you would think a breath of wind might blow her away, but apple-cheeked, bright-eyed, holding to life with the astonishing energy of the very old. Her son was an ironworker, and she frequently came in to buy him a shirt, or collars, or tie. These occasions were very dear to her—a chance to sip the precious wine of living, to talk and be answered, to see the world and hear its scandals. She always prolonged her visits unmercifully, loath to miss one precious drop within the cup.

At her piping request, Harrison flung down a box of linen collars. She examined

them, one by one, holding each in her talon-like hands and clucking her tongue deprecatingly at the dust, "Tchk, tchk, tchk—"

When she had finished, "Show me some more," she demanded.

Harrison scowling, wrenched out another box from the shelves and slammed it on the glass show-case.

"Tchk, tchk, tchk," she clucked. "Why, Mr. Harrison, those are size fourteen. You know my Erny can't wear fourteens, Mr. Harrison—"

Harrison whirled upon her with a significant sneer. "Madam, he said, his voice quivering with wicked joy, "if your son's got a neck like an elephant, is it my fault? If you don't see what you want here, why don't you go to a sporting-goods store and buy him a dog collar?"

It was a splendid witticism. Harrison chuckled over it as the old lady left, speechless with indignation. To other customers, many others, he had been surly or insulting of late, but never had he reached such heights as this. That he lost trade as his self-indulgence heightened his satisfaction.

"She'll never come back," he prophesied. "Guess that fixed her!" Then he remembered that after this day the little old lady would have no store to come back to. To-morrow! With a guilty thrill he thought of the shop to-morrow, picturing it as he had seen other shops where fire had its way.

To-morrow! The very word had an awful significance that both frightened and intoxicated him.

The business faced absolute failure. His methods had driven away all but a transient trade, and recently both hotels, which furnished that trade, had removed from the block, giving way to clothing lofts. But he had kept the fire insurance paid up!

He spent the evening at a theater, returning to the shop toward midnight and not until he had made a careful study of the street to be sure he was unobserved. His overcoat pocket concealed a candle.

In the store-room was a great litter of broken packing-cases, excelsior, and paper. He gathered it into a heap and set the candle upright in the midst of it. It lacked only a match to complete incendiarism.

He was scratching the match when some instinct of cowardice caused him to peer fearfully back into the dark shop. Silhouetted against the front door was a dread figure—a policeman.

The patrolman had stepped into the doorway to escape the cutting wind. Harrison did not know that. He did not stop to reason.

A window at the rear gave onto a wagon yard. The match dropped from his fingers and he reached the window in two long strides. Finally he gained the side street and freedom.

Next afternoon, from across the street, he ventured a guilty glance. The shop had not burned. The sheriff's bill of attachment was posted on the door.

"Me work?" said the ragged, dirty little man who had stopped a stranger in Madison Square. "Why, mister, you know an honest man can't find work nowadays! The big money guns won't let him. By Heaven, them big trust bosses have got a strangle hold on this country. They're an octopus—that's what, an octopus—squeezing the life's blood out of the poor, grinding us poor devils for our last cent and throwing us out like a sucked orange. What's the matter with America? That's what's the matter, the moneyed crooks that are robbing the poor man—and nobody's doing anything to stop it. Law? Don't make me laugh! There ain't no law for our kind. To hell with such a country!"

Rather hesitantly, the stranger gave him a quarter. The little man's song changed. Tears came into his eyes, and his chin quivered.

"I don't ask charity," he whimpered, pocketing the coin quickly. "To hell with charity. I wasn't always like this—had a business of my own—gent's furnishings. I was as good a man as you are, but a woman wrecked my life. Yes, sir, a damned lovely woman. I loved her and she was false to me. To hell with women."

III.

COMRADES was an ultra radical newspaper, published in a basement on East Eleventh Street. Leon Minsch owned an

interest in the sheet, but that could scarcely be called an asset before the time Zenia Kauffmann began writing for it. After Zenia's coming the fortunes of *Comrades* mended with a rapidity that was a notable tribute to her real genius.

For undoubtedly Zenia could express herself. Writing or talking, her words, each one, were loaded with either vitriol or dynamite. She was the very incarnation of madness, destruction, blood-lust; and she could turn stupid, peaceable men into devils. She exhorted, she prayed, she screamed for that millenium when the world would run red with blood and civilization disappear in one vast holocaust.

Though the fortunes of *Comrades* had mended, in the year 1906, it was yet published in the East Eleventh Street basement. There one fall day came Zenia to join Leon Minsch, awaiting her with badly concealed impatience.

Not a tall woman, Zenia had gained considerably in weight. But still the obliquely-set black eyes sparkled with devilry, and there was rich color in her cheeks and her red lips. She wore a new fur that gave her a certain dash and spirit, enough to justify reporters for the yellower newspapers and the Sunday supplements in referring to her as "the beautiful Nihilist."

"Well?" Minsch growled as she favored him with a long, curious stare.

"Well, yourself? I see you didn't clear up that correspondence. How do you expect this office to handle a growing business if you—"

"What have you done?" Minsch challenged, anxious for a diversion.

"Talked to the garment workers. The strike will *not* be settled!" Zenia smiled triumphantly.

"Good!"

"Yes, it was a close call. They were ready to take the terms. They were good terms, too, all the money they asked for—practically all the concessions. Oh, I had to work to beat them into line! I was afraid—for a time—but I gave them straight hell and damnation, called them slaves and cowards and dogs. I had them fighting-mad." Zenia laughed reminiscently. "There was a little while I didn't know

whether they'd kill me or the bosses. But I turned them. They won't go back yet, and the bosses will get sore and take back the offer, so they won't be at work these many months—and, of course, winter's here. If it's a cold winter, and some of them starve—eh, Leon?"

"Yes, so much the better," Minsch nodded. "The cause will gain. Discontent, that's what we must have to work with. By the way, we get word the anthracite miners won't sign the new scale. That means another strike. I talked with some of the comrades. They think you should go again—and talk. You remember what we did in 1903?"

"No." Zenia was decided. "Why waste time? I must take that matter up with the Committee of Ten. I must make them see common sense. The present plan is wrong. We waste our ammunition preaching to men already converted by their wage slavery. What good is that? Leon, we must change our work. The contented workman must be our objective from now on. Where there is trouble, bad conditions, low wages, dissatisfaction, there the cause will spring up and take hold like a weed. What we must gain is the great majority, the men who are paid enough, who *like* to work—"

"What foolishness is this?"

"It is good sense—and good business. Some day the comrades will see it—and they will do as I say. We will send our teachers among the satisfied men, teach *them* to hate their work, to rebel, to demand. They are the majority. When they are out of work, angry, rebellious, hungry, then can we hope for revolution!"

"Splendid!" gasped Minsch. "Zenia, truly, you are wonderful!"

But his admiration seemed to remind Zenia of another matter. For some time she sat studying Minsch, tapping on her desk with a lead-pencil, reaching a decision. Finally: "Leon, I bought the stock you sold to Veeder."

Minsch started guiltily. "Who told you I sold?"

"Never mind, it is mine now. You were a fool to sell, Leon—a fool!"

"You asked me for money—"

"The bigger fool you. You see, I own the stock now—"

"Well?"

"And not only that, nearly all the other shares. In fact, Leon, I own *Comrades*."

Minsch's dull brain tried desperately to keep abreast of this astounding information; to fathom its significance. Zenia went on evenly.

"I own *Comrades*. It is my paper—and a good property. I was the one who made it pay. I deserve to own it. The old control were a bunch of visionaries, Leon—visionaries like yourself—"

"Like me, you say!"

"Like you. They're all gone now—all gone, but you—"

"All gone but you and me, Zenia." Minsch smiled fatuously.

"H-m! Yes. You've been called business manager of this property a long time, Leon—"

"Since it started—"

"Yes, since it started. And never from the day *Comrades* began business have you been worth one pinch of salt—not one pinch—"

"Eh? What's this you say—"

"I merely said you were no use here. No use to the paper. No use at all. You're a loafer, Leon Minsch. You always will be. No good. I accept your resignation."

"What—what damned nonsense is this?" Minsch sputtered. "What new idiocy now? I don't resign. Nonsense! Why—why this paper—Zenia, it is my living. I—I depend on that money—"

"Exactly," Zenia agreed, unruffled.

"But to-day I own this paper. And I intend to make it a good business—a business that will pay me—and earn money and progress for the cause." Zenia added the last with a perfunctory sanctity. "And you, Leon, are no longer of use to *Comrades*. So I dismiss you. You are dropped—fired. Good-by—"

"But, Zenia! What shall I do? What can I do? What can we do?"

"That reminds me, Leon. Another thing, To-day I moved my things from the flat. Our ways separate—"

"What! Then you—leave me? Zenia!"

"I do leave you. Good-by, Leon."

Big, whiskered Leon Minsch must have loved Zenia Kauffmann. There seems proof of that in the fact that, held by no legal or moral bond, for six years, without the slightest effort on her part, he had remained true to her.

When he fully grasped the import of what she had told him so calmly he took the blow like a man. He rose slowly and stood looking down on her while Zenia continued to tap the desk and gaze out of the dirty basement window, set against the ceiling. Finally Leon touched her black hair with his thick fingers, gently, regretfully and murmured her name. With that he turned and went from the office of *Comrades* for the last time.

And that was how Zenia began her days of money-making. She saw an opportunity and she moved to seize it, selecting the shortest possible method of approach. And truly this was a land of opportunity in those good-natured, easy-going days not so long ago—opportunity for honest man and crook alike. A soap-box orator, defiling the flag, was something to smile at; an anarchist, a preposterous person with a lighted bomb, concealed behind a hair mattress of Russian whisker. It was the ideal land for Zenia Kauffmann—and Zenia knew it.

IV.

It was about 1912 that reporters definitely stopped referring to Zenia as "a beautiful Nihilist." Seeing her in the late summer of 1917 talking to Harry Veeder in the office of *Comrades* one would have wondered how she ever had earned that title.

Physically Zenia had grown much stouter with her gradual withdrawal from all forms of active and risky work for the cause. She dressed in sober, black silk—a rather fat, commonplace little woman who wore thick glasses and carried a net reticule bulging with manuscripts.

She had caused—and was causing—a vast amount of lawlessness that varied in degree from the stoning of policemen to cold-blooded murder of public servants, but her participation in these events was not of the sort that can be proved in a court of law.

Zenia kept safe and she owned two apartment-houses in the Bronx and put her money in three banks.

Veeder, with whom she was on intimate terms, was a shrewd lawyer who had an excellent practise defending Reds who came afoul of the law. Leon Minsch was gone from her life; nothing had been heard of Waldo Harrison for sixteen years.

Veeder was shaking his head ominously. "It's a dangerous game—and it's going to be more risky all the time. I've got a straight tip—"

"Harry, I know it. But what could I do?" Zenia spread out her hands, palms up, conveying the notion of her surrender to conditions. "*Comrades* had to keep up its leadership. I had to fight the draft—"

"Oh, that part! There's no great harm in that. Of course they'll suppress an issue every time you open your mouth now. They're watching you, close. That's no great loss—really good advertising—"

"Yes, and the circulation gains. Distributing without using the mails is more trouble, but we're getting contributions—still, I wish I hadn't been forced into the fight. War has changed a lot of things. It adds to my risk—"

"It's the other thing, I mean," said Veeder with a significant look. "This Draft Aid Bureau business—"

"I know, I know! Didn't I try to keep out of that? Didn't I try? But once we started this fight against military service—you see how it goes? But I'm going to get from under, Harry, the first chance—"

The office door opened. Veeder cautioned silence with a flashing eye and they turned toward the visitor bland faces.

He was a hulking nondescript in work-ingman's clothes. "From Comrade Minsch," he said, thrusting a card at Zenia. "He gives me this and says to see you, about—you know."

"Sit down, comrade. Your number was drawn, eh—"

"Excuse me," cried Veeder hurriedly. "Excuse me, comrades. I—I have other business." He left the room.

Zenia listened to her visitor's story—a story already wearisomely familiar to her. She cut it as short as possible.

"Here," scribbling an address, "go there. Dr. Nicholas Jones, you won't forget that name, eh? *Jones*. This paper will identify you. Dr. Jones will tell you what to do. Follow his advice absolutely, you understand? *Absolutely*—"

"What for?"

"You will see. Do what he tells you. When your examination comes—" Zenia smiled. "You look very strong, comrade, a physical giant, eh?"

"Ho, I'll do—"

"Well, don't let that worry you. Dr. Jones will fix that and"—she whispered—"they will not want you for the army if you do as he says."

When Veeder returned the stranger had departed and there was a little pile of greenbacks on Zenia's desk. She indicated it with a smile. "Another contribution to the cause, Harry."

Veeder shook his head, frowning. "Dangerous—dangerous business!"

Zenia sighed and swept the bills toward her open purse.

Veeder held out his hand: "Let me see." With skilled fingers he riffled over the paper money. His jaw dropped and Zenia's eye, meeting his, was fascinated by the dismayed stare.

Veeder silently indicated the bills with a shaking finger.

"What is it, Harry? What—"

His lips formed the ghost of a word: "*Marked!*"

"God!"

Zenia was on her feet. "Give them to me, quick!" She turned toward the window, raised her hand to throw the evidence against her, hesitated and turned back.

"Burn them," she whispered. "That's safer yet—"

"No time, I tell you. The drain-pipe—"

Zenia was half-way across the room, the marked bills in her hand, when the door opened again to admit secret service operatives led by her recent visitor, who had so easily exposed the conspiracy to evade military service.

V.

ZENIA did not greatly mind prison life. She had spent other terms in prison, earlier

in her career. She found the routine rather restful.

Harry Veeder used political influence that secured her a comfortable, sunny cell and the warden gave her congenial work, handling his correspondence. The fund raised for her defense by the Reds was more than enough to furnish her with unusual luxuries. The detail of her personal correspondence and visits from admirers, when visits were permitted, more than occupied her time.

The duration of the war with Germany passed pleasantly.

The fact was Zenia had reached a comfortable middle age, and middle age had brought with it a comfortable philosophy. She still could write impassioned blasphemy against all established government, and particularly that government which had dealt so kindly by her, but her personal inclination now was to avoid fatiguing stress and most particularly any personal risk. Times she found herself hoping for quieter years ahead, years when she could enjoy what she had accumulated.

She intimated as much to Veeder before her term expired.

"Sometimes I feel as if I'd just as soon find some quiet little place out of town and let somebody else worry about the cause," she confessed. "Some day let's try it, Harry?"

Veeder rubbed his bald head—he was a middle-aged, stout, comfortable man with sparkling, shrewd black eyes. "Hope we can," he agreed. "Maybe we'll do it, if—"

"If what? What is it, something new, something—"

"Now, don't start fussing. It's nothing—nothing yet—"

"Harry! There's something in this talk about—about deportation. Don't try to keep it from me, Harry!" Zenia turned a shade paler. She kept her wide eyes on Veeder's face, avid for his denial of the rumor.

But Veeder hesitated and her fears grew. Finally he managed half-heartedly: "No, I think that's all bunk—hope it is—"

When Zenia left prison it was not to rest. She was plunged into the hardest fight of her fighting career. For she was promptly

rearrested and held for deportation to Russia where Comrades Trotsky and Lenin had established something approximating the chaos for which she so long had prayed.

VI.

ZENIA paced the living-room of her flat in the Bronx, raging. Veeder sprawled in a big easy-chair, scowling in an effort to concentrate his thoughts.

"Why, they can't do that," Zenia cried, and she had made the statement many times that day. "They can't rob me of all I've got and send me out of the country! It isn't right! It isn't fair! It's persecution, that's what it is! I guess I know my rights. I've worked hard and I've saved. I pay my taxes. All this stuff, it's my home—mine—mine!" Her wide gesture seemed to sweep up the sunny rooms crowded with shining furniture and thick rugs, photographs, paintings, bric-à-brac—seemed to sweep it all up and hug it to her breast.

Veeder nodded a gloomy assent.

"I know my rights," Zenia repeated shrilly, "and I'll claim them." This from Zenia, priestess of anarchy, foe of all law! There's a law in this land to protect me. The law's got to protect me, it's my right—Harry, take that cigarette-butt off the piano! You trying to ruin that varnish? My God, don't you know what an ash-tray's for!"

Veeder retrieved the cigarette end guiltily. "Trouble is your citizenship," he explained sulkily. "If you were an American—"

"Well, I ought to be, I've lived here long enough. I—why, Harry, I—" Zenia began to laugh.

"What? What's up now—"

"I—listen, I guess I am an American, Harry, but I forgot it. Forgot all about it—it was so long ago. Why, I was married to one once—to an American. Waldo Harrison, Lord, how long ago that was! But I was regularly married—"

"You were? Sure married? Zenia—"

"Regular license and everything! Little Waldo Harrison—"

"No divorce? You're dead sure of that?"

"Never heard of one, no—"

"Zenial!" Veeder's black eyes began to shine. "Look here now—this, this Harrison, let's have the story. If—if he's alive, if we could find him, do you think he would be—well, could you square yourself any way? How about him? All the details now; remember, I'm your lawyer!"

Piecemeal, with many rambling diversions, Zenia sketched the old days of her married life and the character of her first and only husband. Veeder listened intently. Finally he summed up:

"If you're regularly married to an American—this Harrison—still married and he'll acknowledge you, why—that settles it, you are legally an American citizen. Zenia, if we could prove that we could beat this thing they've framed up on us. They can yell till they're blue in the face, we've got 'em beat. That makes you an American, if you married one, and they can't deport you. A wife takes the citizenship of her husband. Why, the Supreme Court of the United States will back us up in that. But, Zenia, this Harrison, will he go through—"

"Waldo Harrison!" Zenia's hearty laugh brought a sympathetic grin to Veeder's lips. "You can manage him, eh?"

"If Waldo Harrison's alive I can manage him," she said firmly. "Alive? Harry, he's just got to be alive—we've got to find him—"

"If he's alive we'll find him—"

"Then leave it to me. Manage him? Huh! It may take a few tears and a little repentance, but he'll do what I say. I *know* him like a book. He always did what I told him to. He will now."

VII.

No need to tell here how Waldo Harrison was found. A national detective agency finally produced him and it cost Zenia half a year's profits. But Waldo Harrison was worth that to her—and a great deal more!

He came to the flat one afternoon, fresh from the train. She understood the detectives had located him somewhere south of the Rio Grande. He looked it!

He wore a very new and badly fitting blue suit of ready-to-wear. It was a bright, poisonous blue and his yellow shoes were

bright and new and looked as if they pinched his feet. He had a new overcoat with a cheap fur collar, a new derby, but his hair needed trimming badly, and he wore a flaming-red bow tie.

His manner was alternately aggressive and tremulous and the weak, gray eyes and slack mouth proved him the same old Waldo. Zenia was amazed at his ageing, at the thin neck so corded and grayish of skin; at his tremulous hands, blue from poor circulation. He smelled of cheap whisky and bad cigars.

Harry Veeder was to give them an hour together—an hour in which she could force a few tears and a mock repentance for her misdeeds. Then Veeder would appear in the rôle of attorney and peacemaker to counsel a loving and respectable old age spent in holy wedlock.

When Veeder knocked he saw at a glance that all was well. Zenia was smiling and the little man who held her hand awkwardly was complacent. He gave them noisy congratulations, reeking with pious maxims and cheap philosophy. He even wiped his eyes and blew his nose with a flourish in his best jury-addressing manner. They settled down a happy party.

"Ah, thank God, Mrs. Harrison for this happy day," Veeder sighed unctuously. "Your husband is indeed a man—a man to be proud of. No divorce, eh? No nasty scandals? You've been true to this wonderful woman—"

"No, sir, no divorce in my family," Harrison bragged. "I've always been true to Zenia. Mr. Veeder, I've been through hell for that woman. Yes, sir, through hell. But that's all right now. I forgive the little woman like she forgives me. I'll stand by her. She's my wife and I'm proud of her—"

Already Zenia was bored by him. Her thoughts wandered. So this was life—the history of twenty years! She smiled whimsically. The circle was complete and here she was back in a flat beside her husband, little Waldo Harrison. Waldo the ineffectual, the boaster, the coward. Comrade Easy-Mark!

Of course, when he had served his purpose Waldo could be put aside again. Vee-

der would help her. What a silly farce it was!

She had almost despaired; the mysterious, menacing will of a hundred and ten million people, working through that vague machine known as law for the moment had frightened her, shaken her nerve, brought her face to face with deportation and ruin. And then Waldo—little Waldo, of all people—had come to save her—to snatch her from exile in a dreaded Russia where anarchy reigned. An anticlimax! An accident. The accident of birth, his citizenship—that made him an American and thus made her one.

It was Veeder's face that checked her, Veeder's face looking as she had never seen it before. The dropped jaw, the staring black eyes, its utter imbecility of expression riveted her attention on the two men.

"What was that, again?" Veeder was croaking.

"Why, just like I told you, Mr. Veeder,"

Harrison beamed. "I read every word this wife of mine said and wrote. She made me see the light. Yes, sir, she showed me what kind of a country we live in! I got down into Mexico. Served the cause, comrade, just like you. Got to be one of Villa's agents along the border. I'm not boasting though—all due to my wife. She taught me what kind of a country I belonged to and when I got my eyes opened I said: 'To hell with America!' and I did what any real man would of done—"

"Well—well!" Veeder prompted, dry-lipped.

Veeder's sharp words and his wife's hard gaze made the little man falter momentarily.

"Why," he stammered, "why, thinking about what Zenia said—her making me see the truth that way—I went before a court and regularly got myself made a citizen of Mexico—gave up my American citizenship. Did that for you, Zenia!"

WANDERLUST

I WATCHED the ships come in to-day
 From far-off ports into the bay:
 From out queer, heathen Hindustan,
 From out mysterious Turkestan,
 From out the distant Hebrides,
 Unchartered isles and trackless seas;
 Each bark a wondrous argosy
 Of parrots, teak-wood, ivory;
 Some flung out black smoke to the breeze,
 Some carried masts of Norway trees;
 One was a Noah's ark, and one
 Came battered by a pirate's gun—
 And oh, their names with romance fraught!
 The Sylph, the Guelph, the Argonaut;
 Black men I saw—huge, dark as sin—
 They swam in sweat and reeked of gin;
 I saw a captain, and he swore
 With choicest oaths from every shore;
 And there were men with grey eyes grim
 From gazing at the skyey rim.—

I watched the ships come in to-day
 From far-off ports into the bay—
 And I was tempted sore this day
 To go and be a stowaway.

Bernard Guilbert Guernsey.

The Big Idea

by Ray Cummings



COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

JIMMY'S BIG IDEA.

JIMMY RAND came out of the wash-house that early April morning and took his place in the line of men dressed in their black, greasy mine-clothes. It was a long line—stretching past the power-house, past the big tower where the coal came tumbling down with a great clatter upon the sorting screens and into the waiting railroad flat cars beneath, until finally it wound itself to the little iron gate and gate-house near the mine-mouth where, through a tiny window, the men gave their numbers to be checked down in a great book.

It took Jimmy many minutes to reach the window that morning—minutes that dragged slowly by as he impatiently shuffled forward with the moving line. For this was the day he was to stop work at noon, and he and Anne were to take that long walk together they had planned. Jimmy looked up at the sky; it was a perfect day, almost cloudless, and with just a hint of chill in the air.

By birth and breeding Jimmy Rand was a coal-miner. His father and grandfather before him had been miners—his father, now dead some three years, had worked in this same Fallon Brothers Mine. It was located near the little town of Menchon, Pennsylvania, in the valley of the Susquehanna.

When he was fifteen Jimmy had left school and entered the mine as a mule-boy. Now, at twenty-two, he was a full-fledged miner, and by his record was one of the best "loaders" on the books; for he was a stalwart young chap, deep of chest, and with long, powerful muscles.

His work was to clean up the coal that had been undercut and then blasted out in the little galleries down in the mine, loading it onto the waiting mule-pulled cars that took it to the bottom of the shaft, where it was hoisted to the surface and on up into the tippie-tower to be dumped upon the screens.

Jimmy did his work well; there were few other loaders who could surpass him in tonnage. This the records showed, for each car bore a little metal tag with the loader's number, of which account was kept.

But although Jimmy was a good coal-miner by heredity and training, he was by nature not a miner at all. He had known this now for many years; but only to Anne, and to his mother, had he ever said so.

"Way back in the days when he was mule-boy Jimmy could remember sitting alone in the great dark silences of the mine, listening to its vague, distant, muffled sounds, and thinking of the great world outside—the world of light and air and color, the world he knew so little about, was in so seldom, and dreamed of so constantly.

Jimmy Rand was by nature a dreamer. He had imagination, which, to one who mines coal, is neither necessary nor desirable. It was not the hours of active work in the mine that proved irksome to him. Stripped to the waist, his lean torso covered with sweat and the grime of coal-dust, he would load steadily. But when the little car was filled, properly trimmed, and the last great, glistening chunk of coal heaved to its top, there was nothing more to do but sit quiet while the mule-boy took it away and brought him another "empty."

Then Jimmy would slip on his coat and sit down in the cool, damp air to wait. He could hear his heart beat then in the sudden silence, and curious noises filled his ears. The comforting noises of his own work were gone; the distant, dull sounds of the mine seemed unreal, and always a little sinister.

He could hear trickling sounds near at hand—the gas seeping out of the newly opened coal crevices. And far off would come faintly to him the muffled thuds of the picks of the other miners.

These were the minutes that Jimmy Rand hated—minutes that seemed to drag sometimes into hours, as he waited for the dancing yellow light on the mule-boy's cap, the welcome grind of his car-wheels, and the mule's slow, tramping step.

This particular April morning Jimmy's work in the mine loomed ahead of him more irksome, more confining, than ever before. But since it must be done, he was anxious to get at it. He thought his turn at the gate-house window would never come; but finally it did, and he slipped past into the yard and took his place on the waiting cage that would shortly lower him and his fellows out of the sunshine into the world of unreality of the mine several hundred feet below.

Jimmy worked hard that morning. His bunkys, who worked at his side in the little gallery, wondered at his unusual silence, although Jimmy was always inclined to be silent. When the first car was loaded, Jimmy fastened to it his metal tag—they took turns in labeling the cars they jointly filled—and then sat down on a lump of coal

with his cap in his hands, trimming the wick of his little pit-lamp with a nail from his pocket.

His mind was far away. He read a good deal now—books from the public library of Menchon, which he took home to read during the evenings. Books of travel and adventure interested him; but more recently he had been reading of industry, and the wonderful, gigantic projects that other men—no smarter than himself, perhaps—had planned and executed, stirred him profoundly. Some day he, too, would accomplish big things—things of which Anne and his mother and sister would be proud, things that would bring him great fame and wealth.

That morning seemed interminable to Jimmy, but finally it came to an end. His last car was loaded, and in a moment the cage had raised him back into the warmth of the noonday sunshine. He checked out, passed through the wash-house, and hurried home to lunch. Immediately after lunch he went to meet Anne, as they had agreed.

Anne Wolff was the sixteen-year-old daughter of one of the other miners in the Fallon Brothers Mine. She was still going to school in the little Menchon schoolhouse—a slender, dark-haired, shy little girl, with a curious, wild sort of beauty and unnaturally big black eyes.

Anne was "Jimmy's girl"—accepted as such by their fellows. It was the only love that Anne had ever known, and to her it meant everything, even though she had never given it voice.

Jimmy had long since told Anne of his dreams, and in the girl's love he had found a ready response, even though at times she could hardly understand these vague longings that he found so difficult to put into words. She believed in him and she encouraged him; and so he made her his confidant, telling her things he never told his sister or even his mother.

Anne was waiting for Jimmy this afternoon at the gate of her little frame house, dressed in her newest print frock, her long black hair in braids over her shoulders, and a gray woolen scarf wound about her throat. Her cheeks were red with the color of youth and health, and her eyes sparkled

with pleasure at sight of him. Jimmy kissed her in greeting, thinking as he did so that she was the most beautiful and wonderful little girl in all the world.

"Where we going?" asked Anne when he had released her.

"I don't know. Where?"

"It's a beautiful day," said the girl, looking up into the blue of the sky. Then she put her hand in his. "Let's go—anywhere."

Walking hand in hand, they slipped past the little village—Jimmy instinctively turned away from the mines—down the road, and out into the open country. Distant blue hills lay ahead; on both sides of the road lay rolling country, and sometimes they passed fields of wild flowers.

"It ain't that I mind the work," said Jimmy suddenly, when they had been walking for some time. "The work's all right. But up here—like to-day, Anne—under the sky—it's different up here. Seems like a fellow had a chance to do something big up here. But down there, Anne—in the dark and damp—all shut in—"

He stopped as the girl tightened the pressure of her fingers upon his. He had often spoken this way to her before—used the very same words, perhaps—and he knew that she understood, and felt that way about it, too. But to-day it seemed different, more important, more pressing a problem—as though to-day, somehow, he must find some way out, some goal ahead toward which he could strive.

He did not care how long it might take to reach it, or what difficulties might be in the way. He knew he would overcome them some way, somehow, if only he could find some goal to head for—something definite instead of just dreams.

"Dad was a mule-boy, Anne," he went on after a moment. "And he died still working in the same mine where he started. Your dad's there, too. It ain't that I'm any better than them, Anne. Only I'm—I'm different. You know that. I want to do something—something big. And all day I sit down there thinking and planning and scheming. And it's no good, Anne. It don't get me anything—and sometimes I wonder if it ever will."

The little girl pressed his hand again and looked shyly up into his face.

"It will, Jimmy," she said softly. "You're going to be a wonderful man some day—I just know you will. And we'll—we'll all be so proud of you."

Again they fell silent. The road they were following—they were now some two miles from Menchon—was taking them directly toward the burning mines that were famous throughout all that part of Pennsylvania. These were a system of coal-mines that years before had been in active operation. They had caught fire, and eventually had to be abandoned.

And all these years since, far down in the great coal measures underground, the fires had been raging. From one mine to another the fire had spread, until now the whole region, several square miles in extent, was honeycombed with uncontrollable subterranean fires.

Through fissures in the ground in many places smoke and steam continually issued; in other parts the fire had broken out to the surface; it was burned out now, leaving a great, jagged, pitted hole. But mostly the coal seams lay so far beneath the surface that only the steam and the thick smoke of the partly consumed coal gases coming through holes in the ground gave evidence of their presence.

The fame of the burning mines of Menchon brought many tourists to visit them. In the summer-time especially, on Sundays, crowds of them came up from the cities of New York and Philadelphia to wander about the region, testing the heat of the ground with amazement, and picnicking beside the little holes that vomited their smoke into the air above.

To them the sight was interesting and wonderful; but to Jimmy and Anne it was an old story—something they had known all their lives and accepted without wonderment.

This afternoon, as the smoke, rising near by, reminded them where they were, they left the road, and with Anne still carrying a bunch of daisies under her arm, approached the scarred region that, as Jimmy had often said, looked for all the world like the volcano pictures in the books. He

made that remark again to-day as they sat down on a rock to rest beside a little smoking crevice.

"You ever seen a picture of the volcano in Hawaii, Anne?" he asked. And when she told him no, he added almost eagerly: "It looks just like this, only very much more wonderful." And then to the admiring and thrilled little girl he described the crater of the great volcano of Mauna Loa as he had read of it.

"It's—it's wonderful to know all those things," said Anne when he paused a moment.

"Some day I'm going to see them all, too," he answered. "Some day I'm going everywhere in the world and see myself all the things in the books—some day when I'm rich—when I've done something."

Then, as his problem came back to him with the words, he relapsed into silence, sitting with his arm about the girl's shoulders and staring idly at the little stream of smoke coming up from the ground before him.

For a long time he sat silent. The familiar scene around, which he had always accepted as usual and without interest, suddenly seemed remarkable and inspiring. He thought of these vast fires in the ground beneath his feet, burning away the coal year after year, and discharging their heat upward into the air uselessly. This tremendous waste seemed now suddenly appalling.

He withdrew his arm from around Anne's shoulder, and, leaning forward, put his hand down close to the little crevice. It was hot there—hot enough to boil water in a kettle, perhaps, he thought. A picture he had seen once, in a book, of James Watt discovering the power of steam, came to his mind. He sat up again and turned to the girl.

"You ever heard of James Watt, Anne?"

Anne shook her head.

"He was the man who discovered about steam. He was just a boy, Anne. One day he was sitting beside his mother's hearth looking at a big iron kettle that had water boiling in it. And he could see that the steam was lifting up the lid of the kettle. And then all at once it came to him how

powerful the steam must be, and why couldn't he do something with it.

"You see, Anne, nobody had ever thought of that before. It looks easy enough to us—that you can make steam and use the power—but nobody had ever thought of it then. And it was right in front of their eyes all the time, and they couldn't see it. But James Watt saw it. And when he got the idea he wouldn't give it up, no matter what anybody said. He worked and worked, and finally he built an engine that would use the power that steam has.

"That was the first steam-engine, Anne. Just think of it—the first steam-engine. And James Watt doped it out all by himself—just because he had noticed how the steam lifted the lid of that kettle. And he had seen it do that hundreds of times before—and so had everybody else—and never thought anything about it. Isn't that wonderful, Anne?"

The girl's eyes were very big and tender as she looked up into his face.

"Yes—it's very wonderful, Jimmy. You know about so many wonderful things," she said softly.

"I was just thinking, Anne—" He paused. "When coal burns underground, you can get the heat out of it just the same. And then if—if—" His voice trailed into silence; he sat staring straight ahead into the distance.

Anne sat quiet, gazing with awe up into his set face, as though she was in the presence of genius. The minutes passed. Then abruptly Jimmy spoke again:

"Why—why do you have to mine coal at all?" he said slowly. "If you can burn it in the ground and get the heat—why do you have to mine it at all?"

Anne did not understand, but she was thrilled by the new note of tenseness in his voice.

She put her hand over his, pressing it encouragingly. "Yes, Jimmy—yes?"

"If—if you could burn the coal right where it is in the ground—and—and put your factory over the heat—then—why, then—"

A long pause; then Jimmy suddenly sprang to his feet.

"I've got it, Anne!" he cried excitedly. "I've got it—the big idea. Why, it's as clear as daylight, once you think of it. I've got it; I've got it!" He threw his arms around the girl, kissing her and hugging her to him with all the strength of his vigorous young arms. "It's the big idea, Anne—what I've always been trying to get. And now I've got it!"

Anne struggled from his embrace.

"What, Jimmy?" she asked eagerly. "What is it?"

Jimmy's face was flushed; his eyes sparkled.

"Why—why, just that, Anne! I'm going to build a factory over where the coal is and burn the coal in the ground without bothering to mine it at all, and just pipe the heat up to the boilers. Don't you see, Anne? Nobody ever thought of that before. They mine the coal now—dig it out and bring it up to the top and take it away on railroads to factories to be burned. And all you've got to do is leave it where it is, and put the factory overhead. Look at the work you save, Anne! Look how easy and simple it is.

"And nobody ever thought of it before. But I've thought of it now, Anne. And I'm going to do it, no matter what anybody says—or how hard I have to work—or how long it takes. I'm going to do it because it's a big idea—and nobody else thought of it, only me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST SETBACK.

IT was some minutes before Jimmy's excitement had abated enough for him to tell Anne his plan; or indeed to be able to formulate in his own mind just what this wonderful new idea that had so suddenly come to him would mean. He could understand now how James Watt must have felt as he planned the first steam-engine—a sort of exaltation which Jimmy could feel now in his own heart plainly.

The idea had come to him abruptly, almost full-born, as Jimmy had read such big ideas often do come. He had seized upon it at once with the feeling that it was his

big idea, believing in it blindly, without stopping to reason it out.

Now with Anne sitting adoringly beside him, imploring him to explain it to her, he felt suddenly self-conscious and embarrassed. The real reason was that he had no knowledge of the subject, no technical information upon which to base an opinion of whether the idea was feasible or not.

But Jimmy did not know that. He only knew, now that he thought it over, that what he had already said was almost all he could say—all that was in his mind, in fact.

"Tell me about it, Jimmy," Anne entreated. "How would it work?" Anne looked up to Jimmy as to a vastly superior intellect. But she had herself an acquisitive mind—untrained, immature, but naturally keenly alert. Now that the first thrill of Jimmy's announcement had passed, she was interested in the subject not only because of Jimmy, but because of the idea itself. And so, just a little with the air of one who demanded to be convinced, Anne wanted to know how it would work.

"Why—why, you see, Anne, it's like this," Jimmy explained. "The way they do it now is to mine the coal—and you know all the expense and time and hell that is—then when it is mined it has to be shipped away hundreds of miles to the factories to be used. Now, if you don't do any of that, but just burn it in the ground where it is, you save all that. Don't you see?"

"There ain't any factories over coal-mines," said Anne.

"No, but there could be just as easy as not. It don't make so much difference where a factory is, so long as it's got a railroad. That's the idea—I'm going to build a factory where the coal is instead of taking the coal to where the factory is."

"How you going to burn the coal in the ground?" Anne wanted to know.

Jimmy thought a moment.

"Why, just—just burn it," he answered finally. "You see, Anne," he hastened to add, "the heat will come up in pipes to the factory boilers at the top—just like the heat comes up." Jimmy pointed to the smoking crevice at their feet.

"Why won't it just get to be a big fire like this?" Anne objected. "This is burning underground—"

"It won't."

"Why won't it?"

"Well, it won't because, you see, Anne"—Jimmy was thinking fast now—"because, don't you see, a fire can't burn without air. I won't give it only just so much air. This one got started and ran away with itself before they could stop it. Mine will be 'way down very deep, where there ain't any air, only just what I pump down to it."

"If I give it lots of air, it will burn hard, and there'll be lots of heat come up. Then if I don't want so much heat, I won't give it so much air. And if I shut the air all off, it 'll go out altogether. Don't you see?"

"Yes," said Anne, convinced. "It's wonderful, Jimmy." She put her hand with a sudden timidity on his shoulder. "You're—you're wonderful, too, Jimmy."

The boy kissed her abstractedly, his mind still busily groping with the flood of ideas that were surging into it. "I can control it easy, Anne, if I start it right, by the air I give it. Why, it's just like when we have a fire here in the mine. You remember the fire started in C tunnel last fall—your father was working there. He found it when it was only in that one room. All we did was wall up that room from the main tunnel, and it went right out when it couldn't get any air, didn't it?"

Anne nodded.

"Besides, over in Coatesville, didn't a whole mine get away from them a few years ago?" Jimmy continued earnestly. "The fire got to the mine-bottom before they could shut it off, and the white-damp began exploding, so they had to get out of the whole mine. All they did then was seal up the shafts at the top to shut off all the air in the whole mine. The fire went out of itself when all the air was used up."

Again the girl nodded; his arguments seemed sound and quite unanswerable.

"Well, that's just the way I'm going to do it. It 'll work, Anne—I know it will," said Jimmy.

"Yes," said Anne. "So do I, Jimmy."

It would work. The more Jimmy thought about it, the more sure he was that it would work. For a long time he sat silent, holding Anne's hand tightly clasped in his, planning in his mind the things he was going to do. His ideas in detail were vague, absurd almost, from a practical standpoint; but Jimmy did not realize that. They looked concise enough to him.

He would go to New York to live for a time while he was putting the idea over. All the big business men that he would have to see and convince were there. Jimmy had saved several hundred dollars from his earnings in the Fallon Brothers Mine during the last few years, so that lack of money offered no obstacle. Then, too, he realized with satisfaction, his mother and sister were not dependent on his wages. The large insurance that his father had scrupulously kept up, and the money that he had saved and carefully invested, had left Mrs. Rand, while not rich, at least comfortably independent. That made Jimmy think of his mother's farm property; and the fact that it might be made to play a part in his big idea came to him at once.

"Why, Anne," he exclaimed suddenly, "it's all as clear as daylight to me now. You know mother's old farm-land over near Coatesville? That's where I'm going to put the first factory. There's coal under it—don't you remember they bored for it two or three years ago? Only it was so deep and the seam was so shallow nobody would work it."

This piece of land—some two hundred acres—had been left Mrs. Rand by her father. It was poor farm-land, mostly sand, and of little value. Some three years before, a company in search of new coal measures around Coatesville had made borings; but the seam they located was not considered profitable to work, and the project which for a time had promised to make the Rand family rich had been abandoned.

But now, with his new idea, this coal could be used. There was a railroad spur very near the property, Jimmy remem-

bered. It would be an ideal place for a factory. It was the only thing he needed to hook his plan together. Now he could talk convincingly to any big man.

Jimmy, with the optimism of youth, had a world of confidence in himself, and he saw no great obstacles in the way of what he wanted to do. A few weeks or months at the most in New York, and he would be back, with a big factory going up, and all the thousand details of a great enterprise under way. And *he* would have a part in it all—he would have been its originator. Then, when he was rich and famous, he and Anne would be married. He slipped his arm again about the girl's shoulders and looked down into her sympathetic, eager little face.

"I love you, Anne," he said.

"I love you, too, Jimmy," she answered simply.

He waited a moment. "Yes, but—but this is different, Anne. We've always loved each other. But I'm a man now. And you're a woman. Don't you see that's different?"

The girl met his glance squarely, and a little wave of color mounted to her cheeks; but she did not answer.

"I want to marry you, Anne. Some day—maybe soon—when I've put this idea over—when I amount to something. I want you for my wife—because—because I love you so much, and you love me. Will you, Anne—will you?"

The girl's arms went up about his neck; her upturned face was tender with love; her eyes, glistening with tears of happiness, met his without a trace of coquetry.

"Yes, Jimmy, I will," she whispered.

The New York offices of the Wentworth Glass Company occupied an entire floor of a large office-building on Broadway near Wall Street. At ten o'clock on the Tuesday morning following his momentous walk with Anne to the burning mines and the birth of his big idea, Jimmy entered the Wentworth Company's offices. He passed through a door marked "Information," and found himself in a little enclosure facing a low wooden railing and a girl at a telephone switchboard.

Behind her he could see a hundred other girls at typewriters, and the steady click of their machines filled the air with a low, confused hum. It seemed to Jimmy that all the business in the world was being transacted in that room at that moment. For an instant he stood appalled. Then he walked up to the switchboard and addressed the girl.

"I want to see Mr. Wentworth—Mr. Robert G. Wentworth," he said. "He's the president, isn't he?"

The girl stared; then she smiled. Jimmy smiled, too—a frank, friendly smile, so ingenuous that it probably surprised the girl even more than his request.

"Have you got an appointment with Mr. Wentworth?"

Jimmy smiled again. "No," he admitted. "But I've something to say to him—something important, that he'll be glad to hear."

"Whom do you represent?" If he had only known it, Jimmy was passing through a very critical moment in his business career.

"Why, I—why, just me."

"What's your name?"

"Jimmy—I mean, James Rand."

The girl's glance roved over his clothes appraisingly. "Where you from?"

"Menchon, Pennsylvania," said Jimmy.

His engaging smile and the extraordinary mixture of diffidence and confidence in his manner won out. Besides, he was an extremely good-looking young man.

The telephone girl could not understand what he wanted, but she was on his side anyway.

"I'll ask Mr. Cooper to see you. He's the office manager," she added confidentially.

Jimmy shook his head. "It's too important for that," he said positively. "I can't tell it to anybody but Mr. Wentworth."

The girl considered a moment. Then, with sudden decision, she made a connection and spoke a few rapid words into the telephone.

"I'm sorry," she said as she turned back to Jimmy. "I thought maybe Mr. Wentworth's secretary would see you."

Jimmy looked blank. It had never occurred to him that any one he selected to tell his big idea to would be reluctant to see him. He had decided on the Wentworth Glass Company quite by accident—the name was engraved on the glassware of the big Broadway restaurant at which he had dined the evening before, and subsequent inquiries had convinced him it was just the sort of organization he wanted—and so he had planned to interview Robert G. Wentworth, its president, that morning. Yet now it seemed impossible for him to see Mr. Wentworth—the telephone girl seemed to think he was crazy to expect such a thing. And even the president's secretary was too busy to bother with him! For an instant Jimmy felt his task hopeless.

"Can't see you," the telephone girl repeated.

"Wouldn't Mr. Wentworth see me?"

"Certainly not," said the girl, with some asperity. "You'd better see Mr. Cooper, if you can't tell it to me. Maybe he would see you."

"No," said Jimmy. "It's too important."

"Then maybe if you'd come back tomorrow Mr. Wentworth's secretary will see you. You might try, anyway—if it's so important," she added, at Jimmy's helpless look of appeal.

"I will," said Jimmy. "Thank you very much."

And with sinking heart he turned from the first business interview he had ever had in his life, and went down into the busy city street below.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTERVIEW.

JIMMY went back despondently to his little boarding-house room. To him the rebuff had been a severe one. He thought about it for an hour; then he had lunch, and went haphazard, with renewed hope, to interview several other big business men whose names he procured.

But either his manner had lost some of its confidence, or else the telephone girls

he almost invariably encountered were less favorably impressed with him than the girl at the Wentworth Company, for in no other instance did he even receive that much encouragement.

No one of importance in the whole great city of New York, it seemed to Jimmy then, cared to see him or to hear about his big idea. He thought about it that whole Tuesday evening, sitting alone in his little bedroom, with his fists clenched and his face flushed and serious.

Two conclusions he reached: one was that he would *not* tell his business to any telephone girl or clerk; and the other was that he *would* see somebody big, if he had to keep on trying till doomsday.

The next morning he was back at the Wentworth Company offices, smiling cheerfully at the girl he had seen the day before. And every day that week he was there, still asking for "Mr. Wentworth's secretary, please."

Finally one morning, still protesting that his business was important, and that he could not tell it either to her or to the suggested Mr. Cooper, Jimmy heard the first encouraging words of his whole week of waiting.

"Mr. Wentworth's secretary will see you in a few minutes," the telephone girl announced.

"What's her name?"

"His name is Mr. Leffingwell Hope."

"Thank you very much," said Jimmy, and sat down on a little bench to wait.

In about ten minutes Mr. Leffingwell Hope appeared. He was a man about thirty, two or three inches shorter than Jimmy, and very much more slender of build. He was immaculately dressed; his hair was straight, slightly long, and neatly brushed; his face was thin, pale, and sharp-featured, with gray eyes, and a long, thin nose with a bump on its bridge, giving him a hawklike expression. Jimmy disliked Mr. Leffingwell Hope the minute he saw him—there was about him something sinister, like a snake.

"Are you James Rand?" the secretary began.

If Jimmy Rand had disliked Mr. Hope from his appearance, he positively hated

him when he heard his voice. It was one of those soft, curiously intoned, effeminate voices; Jimmy had never heard one before. "Damned sissy," he thought. "Yes," he answered. He smiled—as friendly a smile as he could muster.

The secretary did not smile. He came through the little wooden gate and stood facing Jimmy, who had risen to meet him. Jimmy had decided to tell his idea to Mr. Hope; now that he saw him, he decided he wouldn't. A sudden despairing courage made him decide at the same instant to see the president himself. It must be possible to work it some way.

"I want to see Mr. Wentworth—Mr. Robert G. Wentworth," said Jimmy firmly.

"What do you want to see him about?"

Jimmy hesitated. "That's what I'm going to tell him when I see him," he said finally.

"Mr. Wentworth never sees anybody except by appointment."

"I'm in no hurry," Jimmy grinned cheerfully; his courage began coming back. This Mr. Leffingwell Hope, after all, didn't seem so very formidable. "I'll make an appointment, then."

"If your business is important, I'll hear it now." The secretary turned slightly away, as though he were being unnecessarily detained from important work inside. "Tell it quick," he added. "The young lady says you don't represent any one. What is it?"

Jimmy's anger flared up suddenly. He put out his hand and gripped Mr. Leffingwell Hope by the arm, turning him around until they were again face to face.

"Say, listen, you—you don't understand." He tried to keep the anger out of his voice; and when the secretary shook off his hold he let go promptly. "I came all the way from Menchon, Pennsylvania, to see Mr. Wentworth. And I've waited over a week. It's an important thing—it's something he will be glad to hear."

"All right, then—tell it to me. If it's important, I'll ask Mr. Wentworth if he'll see you."

"I *won't* tell it to you," Jimmy said doggedly. "I won't tell it to you or to anybody but him."

"Then I guess you won't tell it," said Mr. Hope, and turned back toward the railing.

This time Jimmy was really angry. He took a swift step forward and again seized the secretary by the arm. "Look here, you—you're not giving me a square deal."

"Take your hands off me," said Mr. Hope evenly. Evidently he was not a coward, for there was no alarm in his eyes.

Jimmy released the secretary reluctantly. "You're not giving me a square deal. You tell Mr. Wentworth I want to see him, and see what he says."

The secretary looked Jimmy over from head to foot. "I don't know what your game is, young man, but I think you're a damn fool."

"If you didn't think so much you'd get along better," Jimmy retorted. "Will you tell him I'm here or won't you?"

Instead of making Mr. Hope angry, this seemed to strike him as amusing, for he smiled. "If you'll give me some idea of why you want to see him, and why he should take his time to see you, I'll tell him, yes."

A flash of inspiration came to Jimmy. "You tell him I know a way to make glass that will only use one-quarter as much coal for fuel as he uses now. That's important enough, isn't it? And tell him it won't take me five minutes to explain it, either."

Mr. Leffingwell Hope looked at Jimmy as if he thought the visitor was insane. Then he smiled again his nasty smile. "All right," he said. "If he's not too busy I'll tell him exactly what you say. And I don't think he'll be interested in the least."

"I don't care what you think, so long as you tell him," said Jimmy; and he sat down on the bench again to wait as the secretary departed.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope revolved this extraordinary interview in his mind as he went back to see his employer. A great curiosity consumed him to know what it was this remarkable youth from the country had to say, so that he almost hoped Mr. Wentworth would see his unknown visitor.

As luck would have it for Jimmy, the president of the Wentworth Glass Company was not in the least busy at that particular moment. As a matter of fact, he was waiting for an expected visit from his daughter. It did not promise to be particularly pleasant, for she had just telephoned him she was coming down to get a check he had only that morning at breakfast told her she could not have.

All of which had made the company's chief executive decide that he would do no business that morning, for in his present perturbed state of mind whatever business decisions he made probably would be ill-advised. So when his secretary appeared with this unique tale of an unknown youth who promised to tell him in five minutes how to revolutionize completely his business, Mr. Wentworth welcomed the diversion. He smiled quizzically, and directed Mr. Leffingwell Hope to show the young man in at once.

"Mr. Wentworth will see you now," said the secretary sourly, reappearing at the little wooden gate.

"Thank you very much," said Jimmy, rising with alacrity. He grinned at Mr. Hope, but without a trace of triumph.

The secretary said nothing more, but led Jimmy past endless rows of stenographers, down a long corridor, through two or three small semiprivate offices, until at last they reached the very innermost private office of the president himself.

With his hat clutched tightly in his hand and his heart beating so it seemed about to smother him, Jimmy suddenly found himself facing a large, flat-topped mahogany desk that stood in the center of the huge office into which Mr. Hope had ushered him.

At the desk sat a gray-haired, slightly stout gentleman of about sixty. His mustache was very long and almost snow-white. His skin was clear and ruddy, and his eyes that smiled at Jimmy as he entered were very kindly. Jimmy liked him at once, but he was afraid of him just the same.

"This is the young man who wants to see you. He says his name is Rand," said Mr. Leffingwell Hope.

"Sit down, Mr. Rand." The president

indicated a chair. "What can I do for you?"

Jimmy sat down. He expected Mr. Hope to take his departure, but instead of leaving, the secretary went to a filing-cabinet and busied himself at one of its drawers. Jimmy wondered if he dared ask him to leave the room, and then decided he had better not. After all, he had wanted to see this big business man, and here he was in his private office, and Mr. Wentworth was waiting for him to begin telling his big idea. He cleared his throat nervously. How would he begin? What was the best thing to say first?

"You were fortunate, Mr. Rand," the president's quiet voice interrupted his reverie. "I'm not busy just at this moment. But I will be shortly."

Jimmy noticed that there was nothing on Mr. Wentworth's desk except ink-well, pens, and blotter; not the slightest sign of any big business to be attended to—and yet he knew Mr. Wentworth was the biggest, most important man in the business world he had ever seen in his life. He could not understand this fact; later he found out that the higher up an executive is, the less he allows to accumulate on his desk and the more leisure time he seems to have.

"What is your business, Mr. Rand?" The president seemed slightly surprised at his visitor's continued silence.

Jimmy drew a long breath. He felt infinitely small, insignificant. The luxurious office seemed suddenly very vast, with great empty spaces all around. He trembled at the thought of hearing his own voice in it. But he knew he must speak—must say something. This was his big chance. He opened his mouth, but before he could speak the words that trembled on his lips the door of the office opened unceremoniously and a young lady swept into the room.

She was a girl about Jimmy's own age—a very pretty girl with blond hair and blue eyes. She was more expensively dressed than Jimmy had ever seen a girl dressed before—except on the stage, perhaps—in big, flowing furs, a soft, sweeping, broad-brimmed hat, and with a huge bunch of

violets at her waist. She carried herself with the air of a princess; and Jimmy felt suddenly abashed at being in her presence.

As she came in the young lady nodded briefly to Mr. Hope, who smiled at her easily yet with considerable deference. The president greeted her with a little frown of annoyance.

"I'm busy now, Estelle," he said mildly, rising from his chair to face her. Jimmy stood up also, which he felt somehow was the right thing to do.

The young lady evidently had no intention of withdrawing. She looked Jimmy up and down from head to foot calmly, and then said to her father:

"Very well. I'll wait for you." Then she turned away, and, drawing up a little chair near the filing-cabinet, entered into a low-toned conversation with Mr. Hope.

The president sighed hopelessly. For one brief instant he seemed undecided. Then he frowned.

"I— Tell your business to my secretary," he said abruptly to Jimmy, waving his hand in dismissal. "He'll take care of it for you. Oh, Mr. Hope—if you please. Will you see this young man in your office? Thank you. Good day, Mr. Rand."

Jimmy stood stock-still. He could feel himself flushing. A sudden hot resentment toward this girl—this intruder—possessed him—that she should have come into the room, at this of all times, just when he had been given his big chance. And now she had spoiled it all!

"This way, Mr. Rand"—the secretary was standing by his side—"I'll see you now."

Jimmy nodded confusedly. Mr. Wentworth inclined his head also, and then turned aside to speak to his daughter. And Jimmy, not having spoken a word since he entered the president's office, turned and followed Mr. Leffingwell Hope through the opened door.

The private office of Mr. Wentworth's secretary, into which Jimmy was now ushered, was a smaller and only slightly less magnificent replica of that of the president himself.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope took a seat at his desk, and motioned Jimmy to sit down also.

"Mr. Wentworth is always very busy," he began, in his soft, unpleasant tones. "What is it you have to say?"

Jimmy, in spite of his continued resentment at the way he had been treated, and his increasing awe of Mr. Leffingwell Hope, was thinking fast. He had decided before that he would not tell his plan to Mr. Hope. But if he did not, probably he would never be able to tell it to any one—in this company, anyway. And the other companies he had been to had treated him even more coldly.

If he did tell it to Mr. Hope, now while he had the opportunity, the secretary undoubtedly would explain it to Mr. Wentworth. And the president would be interested, of course, and then later on, he could see him again about it.

Jimmy resolutely put aside his dislike and distrust of Mr. Hope and took the plunge.

"It's about the coal you burn in your factories for fuel, Mr. Hope," he began. And then after a brief pause, he went on with a rush:

"I've been a coal miner all my life, and I've been thinking a lot about coal. The coal you use in your glass factories has to be mined and hauled from the mine to you. That's what makes it cost you so much. I—I know you burn a lot of it, and this year especially, with all the labor trouble and the shortage, it is getting to be awful expensive. And—and I've been thinking—why couldn't the coal be burned in the ground right where it is, and put the factory there—instead of mining it? The heat would come up from below, you know."

Jimmy paused, a little out of breath. It wasn't exactly what he had wanted to say; somehow it didn't seem to sound quite as forceful as he had thought it would.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope raised his eyebrows. "Perhaps you'd better say that over again," he suggested. "I'm afraid I don't understand you."

"Why, I—you see, Mr. Hope, my idea is to build a factory over some coal deposit, and then, instead of mining the coal, just burn it in the ground, and pipe the heat up to the factory boilers."

Once Jimmy got started he found it

easier. Mr. Hope listened casually—impatiently, Jimmy thought. But he did not notice the gleam of interest in the secretary's eyes so at variance with his disinterested, almost sarcastic manner. Finally Mr. Hope interrupted him.

"Your idea is ingenious, young man, and certainly it is novel." He laughed. "I don't mind saying, even if it were feasible, it perhaps would be a good thing for us."

Jimmy flushed at the secretary's sneering tone. "You—you don't think the idea's any good, do you?" he asked aggressively.

Mr. Hope's manner suddenly changed.

"You say you propose to burn this coal in the ground just where it lies?"

"Yes, sir." Jimmy hated himself for the impulse that made him answer so deferentially.

"How would you control the fire?"

Jimmy told him in detail as well as he could how he would supply the air necessary to combustion. Mr. Hope smiled his nasty smile. But with a wave of his hand to dismiss the subject he said:

"Grant that. How far from the flames you will produce underground will the furnaces of the factory be?"

Jimmy thought a moment. "Why, maybe five hundred or a thousand feet."

"And you propose to transport the heat that distance and then apply it to crucibles for the fusion of glass?"

"Yes, sir," Jimmy answered promptly, although he had only a vague idea what Mr. Hope meant by these technicalities.

"What temperature do you suppose you could attain?"

"Why, I—I don't know," said Jimmy.

"Could you get a temperature of say sixteen hundred degrees centigrade?"

"I—I—" Jimmy suddenly remembered how he had once boiled eggs over a hole of the burning mines. "What's the temperature of boiling water?" he asked abruptly.

Jimmy was holding his own, not by his ability to argue, but by his astounding ingenuousness. The secretary gasped a little at such a question coming at such a time.

"One hundred degrees centigrade," he managed to reply.

One hundred degrees! And Mr. Hope had mentioned casually a temperature sixteen times as great! Jimmy's heart sank as he realized how impossible it was. He realized, too, how little he knew about the whole proposition, for the secretary had recovered from his surprise and was saying quietly:

"You asked me if I thought your idea was any good. I do not."

"But you'll tell it to Mr. Wentworth?" Jimmy put in quickly.

"Yes, I'll tell it to Mr. Wentworth—and let you know." Mr. Hope rose to terminate the interview.

Jimmy rose also. He realized now fully for the first time that there were a thousand things about the plan that he had never even thought of, much less understood. Mr. Hope would explain the idea to the president, of course, but the way he would tell it made Jimmy feel that Mr. Wentworth wouldn't think any more of it than his secretary did.

Jimmy's confidence in himself and in the idea was unshaken. But he saw clearly that it would take a long time to get it into shape—for him to understand it, anyway—and he wouldn't want any one else to go ahead with it unless he did understand it.

Jimmy saw also that he would have to know a good deal about the business of whatever company it was he was going to try and make adopt the idea. There was no use going to any other company—the Wentworth was as good as he could find. And all this time, while he was learning all these things, he would have to live.

The idea occurred to him then that perhaps he could get a job right here in this very organization. Then he could learn the glass business, and work out his idea at night. And when he was all ready and had all his facts down pat he could tackle Mr. Hope and Mr. Wentworth again. He could never find anybody better than Mr. Wentworth, he was sure of that.

All this flashed through Jimmy's mind in an instant. Mr. Hope was holding out his hand.

"Good day, Mr. Rand. Thank you for coming in."

Jimmy shook hands. "Mr. Hope, can I

have a job with your company?" he asked abruptly.

The secretary seemed very much taken aback by the directness of this unexpected, but simple request. He hesitated; then with a curious smile on his lips, seemed to reach a sudden decision.

"What can you do? Do you know anything about the glass business?"

"Why, I—why no, I don't," Jimmy stammered. "I don't know anything about any kind of business. But I can learn," he added hopefully. "I can learn anything."

Mr. Hope met his earnest eyes steadily. "You see Mr. Cooper as you go out—he's the man about that. Tell him you have seen Mr. Wentworth and me this morning. Tell him I said to fix you up if he can."

The secretary's words surprised Jimmy greatly. Mr. Leffingwell Hope was not such a bad sort after all!

"Yes, sir. And—and thank you very much," said Jimmy.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. HOPE'S IDEA.

MR. LEFFINGWELL HOPE concluded his interview with Jimmy in a state of mental excitement of which his calm, imperturbable demeanor gave no sign. His keen mind had seen at once the possibilities in Jimmy's crude idea.

Mr. Hope was not a technical man. But he understood, infinitely more clearly than Jimmy possibly could, what this plan would accomplish for the Wentworth Company, assuming it would work out. Mr. Hope had imagination. He saw the technical difficulties standing in the way—some of them he had pointed out to Jimmy. But he knew, also, that probably the idea, thus crudely conceived, could be developed by some one having the necessary technical knowledge.

After Jimmy left, Mr. Hope sat alone at his desk for fully half an hour, turning these thoughts over and over in his mind. Whoever broached this plan to the Wentworth Company and proved it successful

would make a fortune. A fortune in a year or two! More than he could make the way he was going in ten times that long! He could marry Estelle, then; with the money, and the prestige such accomplishment would give him, that would be easy!

Only this youth from the country standing between him and a fortune and a marriage with Estelle. And what did this boy have—nothing but an idea. And now *he* had the idea, too—he could develop it—put it forth as his own when the proper time came.

He would have to deal with this boy—that would be easy. Mr. Leffingwell Hope smiled his thin smile as he mused on how easy that would be. That was a clever stroke, too—helping him get a job right here in the company. He could keep his eye on him better that way—and then, when the proper time came, have him fired out of the organization.

Simplicity itself! Also, what a perfect alibi! Suppose anything did leak out? Suppose the boy did make a fuss—claim the idea as his own? Would it have been likely, then, under such circumstances, that he, Leffingwell Hope, would have assisted in getting a job right here in this same company for this boy whose idea he was about to use as his own? Certainly not—a perfect alibi. And because the boy *was* around the offices, that could be shown to be the way *he* had stolen the idea from Mr. Hope.

The thing was perfect—it couldn't fail. All he needed now was some technical dope. Merkle would be the man. He would see Merkle. Shifty little man, but he could handle him.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope felt very pleased with himself when his meditations reached this point. He tossed his empty cigarette box into the waste-basket and went in to see Mr. Wentworth.

"About that boy who was in here just now," he began casually, finding the president disengaged at the moment. "I thought you might be amused. A crazy, wild idea. It seems his mother or somebody owns some land up in Alberta. Somebody else struck natural gas ten or twenty miles away. He seemed to think we'd be

anxious to drill on his mother's place and put a factory there if we were lucky enough to bring in a well. Something like that, anyway—he talked so wild I couldn't follow him exactly."

The president smiled. "Why didn't you tell him about the McKeesport gas wells—that's a little nearer home. They're bringing one in every day down there."

"I promised him I'd tell you what he said, so I'm doing it, but you know—" Mr. Hope waved his hand vaguely.

"Earnest-looking boy," said Mr. Wentworth. "Tell him I'm sorry—not interested."

Isaac Merkle was a consulting chemist who did a considerable amount of work for the Wentworth Glass Company. He lived and worked in a six-room flat on the top floor of a tenement house in that somewhat unsalubrious section of New York known as Hell's Kitchen. His laboratory consisted of one large room that had been formed by knocking down the partitions of three smaller rooms; it was in the other three rooms that Mr. Merkle, who was a bachelor, lived alone.

The laboratory was a long, bare room, with a skylight. It was furnished with two long wooden tables, littered with chemical apparatus, several small chairs, and a wooden table. There was a large soapstone sink over at one side, and a long, low shelf down one wall, with a row of villainous-looking bottles upon it.

To this laboratory, by appointment, came Mr. Leffingwell Hope that very same evening. Mr. Merkle, as agreed, was quite alone when the secretary arrived. The chemist was a fat, middle-aged little man, with a round, very red, smooth-shaven face, an over-large nose, and mouse-colored hair with a bald spot on top.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope, seating himself uncomfortably on one of the little wooden chairs, was at some trouble just how to begin the business that had brought him.

"Ike," he said finally, "I've got an idea that might, if it is any good, make us a lot of money." He hesitated; and then, feeling that frankness would be his best policy, went on:

"I'm going to tell you all about it—everything I know. I want your advice in the first place, and then, if the idea's any good—which maybe it's not—we'll go in it together—share and share alike, no matter what we have to do to pull it through. That O. K.?"

"The way you talk it's crook stuff," said Mr. Merkle. "You couldn't scare me if it's to be made real money. Shoot."

"It isn't crooked," the secretary hastened to assure him. "But it's a matter requiring, for the present, absolute secrecy."

"Shoot," said Mr. Merkle again.

The secretary hesitated. He didn't exactly trust Mr. Merkle. He realized that he had nothing but an idea to tell. If the idea was worth anything at all it was a big thing. He thought it best to set this forth frankly to his friend at the outset.

"To hell with that argument," said Mr. Merkle, interrupting him, though without sign of resentment. "I ain't never double-crossed a friend yet. If you couldn't believe it shut up before you start."

Feeling that he had to be satisfied with that, the secretary went ahead and recounted briefly the whole story of Jimmy's idea. Only he did not mention Jimmy—but set it forth as his own.

The chemist listened attentively, with his eyes fixed on his companion's feet.

"Well, go on, Ike, what about it?" said the secretary impatiently, after a moment. "I've been thinking about it quite a while. Is it any good?"

"You could do it," said Mr. Merkle with deliberation.

"How?" The secretary's eyes sparkled, but without waiting for his question to be answered he went on to name all the objections he had pointed out to Jimmy.

"You ask me could it be done and right away you tell me why you couldn't do it," said Mr. Merkle.

"Well, all right, then. How?"

"All what you say about piping up heat is bunk," the chemist declared. "You couldn't make a fire four hundred feet in the ground and melt glass with it so far away. Bunk. But listen, Leff, here is it what you could do—in the ground you start a fire—"

"How could you control it?"

"Like you said—with air. That part, it's all right. But the heat you don't pipe up—that's bunk. You pipe up the gases from the coal—the products of combustion that are only part used, and you burn them in the regenerator furnace. Maybe you could get very good producer gas. How could I tell till I work it out? Maybe producer gas forty-five per cent combustible—how could I tell?"

The chemist here plunged into a long dissertation of an exceedingly technical nature, which Mr. Leffingwell Hope, even though he had some knowledge of the types of furnaces used by the Wentworth Company, followed with difficulty. But the gist of it was, he gathered, that in all probability the idea could be worked out to a practical conclusion. And as Mr. Merkle finished, waxing enthusiastic as he developed his thoughts by voicing them: "He was just the baby to work it out, if there was enough money in it for him."

"That's where I come in," said the secretary. "I've doped out the idea—now you work it out. I'll see we get the money—we'll split it fifty-fifty!"

"You could consider it done. Have you told it to the boss?"

"No, certainly not. I want it in good shape first. That's why I told you it was a matter demanding secrecy. I haven't told it to any one—only you." Mr. Hope thought a moment. "How about some other company than this one—would that be better, do you think?"

The chemist considered. "What it saves is only part of the cost of coal," he said finally. "It ain't that every factory what you tell it to right away breaks its neck to move to where the coal is."

"But it's particularly good for the Wentworth Company, you mean?"

"For them when they use so much fuel, and because, don't you know about the new plant what they expect to put up next year? For them it would be a good thing."

Mr. Merkle referred to the fact that the Wentworth Company was considering the building of another factory for the making of optical glass. For some months they had been looking for a good location, one

preferably where they could use natural gas for fuel.

"I know," said Mr. Hope. "These new 'gas babies' at McKeesport got Mr. Wentworth interested last winter. But I heard him say he had about given up that locality as a possibility."

Merkle nodded. "Your idea beats that," he said definitely. "You could pick up a coal property cheap—where the coal was so deep you couldn't mine it with profit."

"Then we'll put it through with Wentworth," Mr. Hope announced with finality. "You work it out—how long will it take?"

"A month or two. Maybe more. You know it, Leff, I'm busy now."

"You rush it through. I'll do the rest. Let me know how you get on. And keep your mouth shut."

"You could count on me," said Mr. Merkle.

It was a big thing! All the way home that evening, the secretary's heart beat fast at the thought of how big it was. A fortune in his grasp at last! A fortune that would give him Estelle! And no one to divide the money with except Merkle, and probably he could think of some way of getting rid of him at the last. A fortune for himself! Riches—the greatest thing in the world!

CHAPTER V.

JIMMY FINDS A FRIEND.

JIMMY got his job. He wouldn't have, probably, except for the fact that his message from Mr. Hope enabled him to get an interview with Mr. Cooper, during the course of which Jimmy convinced the office manager that he was an extremely intelligent and likable young man. Since he had no business experience whatever, all Mr. Cooper could think of to give him was a sort of glorified office-boy job, at a salary of fourteen dollars a week.

Jimmy didn't keep that job very long. Within a month he convinced the office manager that he could dictate business letters, and that his judgment on things he understood could be trusted. Also, Jimmy

had made it clear by his attitude during that month that he never would tackle anything that he did not understand thoroughly; his encounter with Mr. Hope had impressed the importance of that on his mind for all time.

So Jimmy was given a desk and a dictating machine, and a steady stream of letters, comparatively unimportant letters at first, was diverted in his direction.

All that summer Jimmy worked very hard. He entered a night school where three evenings a week he studied with a view to getting "dope" on his big idea. He found this study helpful to him in general, but not very useful in giving him specific information on how to burn coal underground, especially since he was determined not to broach the subject directly to any one.

When he had been with the company about a week, Jimmy approached Mr. Hope in the office and thanked him for the job.

"All right," said the secretary, and smiled. "I'm glad you like it."

Jimmy felt then that his first impression of Mr. Hope had been quite a wrong one.

"I do," he answered earnestly. "Thank you very much—did you see Mr. Wentworth yet about that—that idea of mine?"

Mr. Hope looked him steadily in the eyes. "Yes. He said to tell you he's not interested. Sorry."

This was hardly a blow to Jimmy, for he had expected as much. But next time he broached the subject—it would be different, then!

"Take my advice, young man," the secretary went on, "get that foolish stuff out of your head. Stick to your job—you'll get along—you look as though you had brains."

"Thanks," said Jimmy. He tried to avoid sarcasm. "I will."

Mr. Hope nodded and left him.

That summer was a hard one for Jimmy. Even though he had an all-absorbing idea to fill his thoughts, the utter loneliness of his life was hard to bear. He worked all day at the office. Three evenings a week he spent at the night school; and the others he wandered aimlessly about, going to the movies often and to a play occasionally, and always alone.

At the office Jimmy made many business friends. Every one liked him; his ready smile and his ingenuous manner made friends easily. Jimmy's work took him constantly into many different departments of the organization, and in each of them he soon found opportunity to learn what there was to know about that particular branch of the work. His system, as he developed it in his mind, was not only to learn about his own job, but about the jobs of as many others as he possibly could.

It wasn't so very hard to do either, as he soon found out. There was no particular mystery about business, as he had always supposed, and among the clerks and under officials with whom he was working during this period, the competition, so far as brains was concerned, was not alarming.

Jimmy was not the least inclined to be conceited, but there were at least twenty young men in the company that he told himself he had "skinned to death for brains."

It was just after his second visit home, and when he had been with the Wentworth Company about three months, that he first made friends with George Cooper outside of the office.

The office manager was a lanky chap of thirty-one. He was smooth-shaven, with big, rough-hewn features; piercing blue eyes, and sparse, sandy hair. His voice had a deep, booming quality, and, around the office, a vigorous note of authority that commanded respect.

But at the theater, where he and Jimmy went that first evening, he was very different—a modest, unassuming, laughing boy, years younger than he appeared during business hours. The change surprised Jimmy tremendously. He immediately lost the awe he had always unconsciously felt for his business superior, without losing any of the respect or admiration; and in consequence felt his own importance and confidence in himself enhanced.

This friendship of Jimmy and George Cooper grew rapidly; until finally, one evening in September, Jimmy felt he could no longer keep his great secret to himself. So he told his friend all about it, and just what Mr. Hope had said.

The office manager was enthusiastic. He knew no more than Jimmy about the feasibility of the plan itself—and Jimmy up to this time had learned very little—but he realized more than Jimmy possibly could how beneficial to the company it would be if it worked. Also, Mr. Cooper had a better idea of how to go about finding out the things Jimmy wanted to know than he had.

So they planned to "dope it out" together, and immediately started spending two evenings a week at the public library looking it up. After which, by Christmas at least, the office manager proposed taking Jimmy to one of the company's technical men.

"I been thinking, George," said Jimmy one evening, when they had been working on his idea about a month. "I told Mr. Hope all about this plan of ours that first day. He's never said a word about it since, except to tell me Mr. Wentworth said it was rotten. It worries me sometimes to think he's in the secret. I used to think I liked him. But I don't. I'm afraid of him, somehow. Do you like him?"

"No, I don't," said Mr. Cooper decidedly.

"I've been wondering," Jimmy went on, "suppose he wanted to use the idea for his own. It's good—we know that now. And anybody who knows about it could use it. That's what worries me—to think Hope knows all about it, too."

The office manager deliberated on this.

"What could he do if he wanted to?" he asked finally.

"I don't know; what could he?"

"Nothing that I know of. He told the boss about it—the boss knows it's your idea. You can trust R. G., Jimmy; he's as square as they come."

"I believe you," said Jimmy. "But just the same—"

"Just the same, Hope will bear watching. You're right on that. I'll watch him. But I don't see what he could do. Probably he's forgotten all about it by now."

"I hope so," said Jimmy fervently.

With the office manager to help him, Jimmy progressed rapidly with his big idea.

It hadn't taken them more than a few days to discover that the scheme of piping up heat from a fire in the ground was impractical. Then, when they came to study the company's furnaces, about which Mr. Cooper, being entirely an office man, was almost as ignorant as Jimmy, they found that it was the unconsumed coal gases that could be piped up, not the actual heat—a conclusion that to Isaac Merkle had been immediately obvious.

At this point in their investigations they were jubilant, for they realized that the idea *was* feasible. Mr. Cooper was for an immediate consultation with one of the technical men of the company, but Jimmy absolutely refused. There were too many who knew about it already. Something might happen. And so the office manager had to give up that plan, and they went ahead, studying the thing out alone.

"I'd rather it took longer," said Jimmy. "When we get it ready ourselves we'll put it up to Mr. Wentworth. After that, we can talk to everybody all we want."

It was just after this—early in November—that Jimmy met Estelle Wentworth socially. And the way it came about was this:

Estelle Wentworth was typically a daughter of the rich, aptly described by that familiar alliteration: pretty, proud and petulant. In all her twenty-one years she had been cared for with that care that only a misguided, adoring mother, a father weak enough to desire peace above all else, and the character-ennervating luxuries that unlimited money can give.

Estelle was neither weak, nor vicious. She was only normal—and with her environment and upbringing was just what one would have expected her to be. Her one creed, at the age of twenty-one, was to have a good time. This, somehow, she found increasingly difficult. All the usual forms of pleasure desired by young girls, were freely hers. Dances, parties, the theater and opera, were all lavished upon her.

For a time they sufficed; and yet, because she was a normal girl, no finer or less fine than thousands of others of her race, inevitably the time came when she found herself desiring something more.

Affairs of the heart, which usually play

so large a part in feminine adolescence, had never seriously touched Estelle. That, too, was the inevitable result of her environment. Young men admired her, adored her, and plied her with attentions. But Estelle felt herself in some way above them all. She accepted their adulation amusedly, just a little as a princess of the middle ages might have accepted the adulation of her courtiers—or laughed at the antics of her favorite jester—but nothing more.

Perhaps Estelle had no capacity for love; or perhaps, because of what civilization had made her, those men of deeper feelings knew that she had nothing to offer them—and so went their way.

Estelle was mildly interested when she first saw Jimmy that morning in her father's office. He was a new type to her, so obviously different from any man she had ever met. She had no thought of ever meeting him socially; indeed, the idea then would have filled her with indignation. But the sturdy manliness of him attracted her in spite of herself.

She liked Mr. Leffingwell Hope—better, perhaps, than most of the young men of her acquaintance, for the secretary, seeing in her a practical and easy route for his own self-advancement, had for nearly a year been making himself as charming as possible; but she could not help comparing him to Jimmy.

They were as different as two individuals of the same sex could well be, and although Estelle did not know it, Jimmy did not suffer by the comparison.

Estelle was mildly interested in Jimmy from the moment she first saw him. There was no sentiment in her thoughts of him, merely curiosity. She remembered, too, when he had first seen her, the look of awe that had come to his face. And later she had seen plainly his resentment at her presence in the office. Resentment from a young man was something new to Estelle. It did not make her angry; it piqued her, and she could not forget it.

When Jimmy had been with the company about two weeks Estelle came to the office again, and saw him there. Later she learned from George Cooper how he happened to be there, and what he was doing.

She felt a little ashamed of herself at the sudden realization that she was interested in one of her father's office boys, and decided to forget all about him. Soon after that she went to the seashore with her mother for the summer.

When she returned to the city in the fall the very first time she went to the office she passed Jimmy in the corridor. The change in his appearance was startling. His hair was no longer close-cropped high over his ears. His clothes were those of the city; his whole bearing had changed. Nothing could make Jimmy look in the least foppish. He was still rugged and manly looking, but, Estelle thought, no longer uncouth.

As he passed her he smiled an answer to her nod of recognition. There was no resentment in his smile, but neither was there admiration for her, nor awe. It was just a calm, impersonal smile as though he had already forgotten her existence as soon as he passed.

This piqued Estelle still more—and made her vaguely angry. She sought out George Cooper at his desk.

"I just passed that young man—Mr. Rand, isn't that his name?—in the corridor," Estelle began, after they had exchanged a few remarks. "How is he getting on?"

Mr. Cooper was a little surprised at her question, but he did not show it. "He's getting along fine, Estelle," he replied with enthusiasm. "Have you met him—I didn't know that."

"No," said Estelle carelessly. "He was in father's office one morning—I thought he looked interesting. Why?"

"He's a dandy chap. Not a city boy at all—used to be a coal miner. We've been out together a good deal—Marion likes him tremendously." (Marion was George Cooper's sister.)

"Oh," said Estelle. Then, after a moment—"He was going to tell father about some plan he had. Father told me it was some foolish idea. What ever happened to it?"

The office manager hesitated. He rather liked Estelle. She was a silly, vain little thing, but he liked her—perhaps partly be-

cause his sister seemed to be her only real girl friend.

"Can you keep a secret, Estelle?"

The girl nodded.

"Honest?" Mr. Cooper's manner was as boyish with her as it was stern and authoritative toward his office employees.

"Yes—surely."

"He and I have been working on it together, and—it's going through!" said the office manager impressively.

"What does father say?" Estelle was thrilled more by the solemnity of Mr. Cooper's manner than by his words, for she had no idea what it was Jimmy proposed doing.

"That's why it's a secret, Estelle. We haven't put it up to him yet. But we've got it all ready—as near as we can without having broached it to any one in the company. And we're going to spring it in a day or two."

The office manager was already sorry he had told the girl this much, and he hastened to add:

"You'll be careful not to mention it, won't you, Estelle? Not to any one. It wouldn't be very nice to have it get to your father before we tell it to him ourselves."

Estelle frowned. "I told you I wouldn't say anything. I'm not a child."

"Don't," said Mr. Cooper briefly; and then changing suddenly, gaily asked her when she was going to let him take her to the theater again.

"Next Tuesday or Wednesday, if you like," she replied. Then, as another thought came to her, she added slowly: "To-morrow's our night at the Metropolitan. Father said I could have all six seats. I thought, perhaps, you and Marion would like to go with me?"

"Fine," agreed Mr. Cooper cordially.

Estelle hesitated. "And if you say Marion likes this Mr. Rand, it might be all right to take him, too. He would probably enjoy it."

The unconscious patronage in her tone was not lost on Mr. Cooper. "I'll ask him if you want me to," he said with a smile. "He would enjoy going, I'm sure."

"And I'll ask two others," said Estelle.

"It's 'Bohème' to-morrow night—it ought to be good."

CHAPTER VI.

TWO DISCOVERIES.

MR. LEFFINGWELL HOPE, passing down the corridor this same Friday morning, saw Mr. Cooper escorting the president's daughter to the elevator. It so happened that Jimmy, with a sheaf of papers in his hand, came through a near-by door at the same moment.

The office manager, with a heartiness of manner that surprised Mr. Hope greatly, introduced Jimmy to the girl. The secretary was too far away to hear what was said, but the friendliness of the girl's greeting was only too apparent. Mr. Hope turned abruptly and reentered the main office.

With this visual evidence of the firm standing in the company that Jimmy Rand had reached, Mr. Leffingwell Hope cursed himself for a fool. He should never have let that boy get a job with them in the first place. It had seemed all right then; he had never supposed that a kid like that from the country would last in business. And his having been around the office would have been a good alibi.

Mr. Hope had always been convinced that something would turn up to eliminate him—he would prove inefficient and be fired or something. But that was just what Jimmy had not done—or been. On the contrary, he had made good. He was still answering correspondence—but it was the more important things that were given him now. And he had a way of poking his head into every department of the organization. Even Mr. Hope had noticed that.

In late September Jimmy had been able to arrange a trip to one of the company's near-by factories, which was something Mr. Hope did not learn until afterward. And he never knew that the real reason why Jimmy went was so he could investigate the conditions under which glass was made and apply them to some of the theories he and George Cooper had worked out.

The secretary was furious with himself

for having allowed things to go along this way. For some six months now he had been waiting for Merkle to get the idea into shape. He had his own plans perfected—had purchased with his own money a very likely coal property near Scranton which he proposed to sell, at an enormous profit, to the Wentworth Company.

Mr. Hope had never told Merkle about that. As a matter of fact the secretary was just getting ready to show Merkle that he didn't figure in the scheme as largely as he thought he did. But first Mr. Hope wanted to be sure the chemist had finished his investigations.

Now with the realization that Jimmy Rand, the originator of the idea, was, instead of being fired, apparently in a fair way of obtaining a most unlooked-for prestige with the company, Mr. Leffingwell Hope cursed himself for a fool. Whatever he was going to do must be done quickly. He would tell the idea as his own to the president at once; after that, just let them try to prove he hadn't originated it!

That same evening Mr. Leffingwell Hope called on the chemist in his laboratory. Mr. Merkle, it appeared, was quite ready to go to the president at any time Mr. Hope desired. He was indignant at the secretary's implication that he had been laying down on the job.

"Any time you could ask me now, I go to R. G. and show him absolutely how this plan works to save him big money. What more could I do, I ask you? I do my part—you ain't done nothing yet that I can see."

"I'll do enough," said Mr. Leffingwell Hope. "Mr. Wentworth's away," he added. "He'll be back Tuesday noon. We'll see him Tuesday afternoon sure. About two o'clock. You'll be there?"

"Positively I'll be there—two o'clock," the chemist agreed.

Mr. Hope hesitated. The time had come to show Merkle just where he stood.

"Oh, Ike," he began thoughtfully. "Now that we're all ready, we might as well understand each other. As we agreed at the start, I'm to handle this thing absolutely, and I'm to give you ten per cent of all I make. Right?"

The little chemist, his lower jaw dropping in astonishment, stared blankly at Mr. Hope.

"Ten per cent of any stock they give me, or anything I make on the initial deal. That's right, isn't it?"

It wasn't right, and as soon as he recovered his power of speech, Mr. Merkle said so, in the most emphatic words he could think of. Fifty-fifty was what they had agreed.

Mr. Hope, with an injured air, stated a remembrance of their first agreement that was totally at variance with what Mr. Merkle's own memory told him were the facts. And he remained obdurate—ten per cent or nothing. Hadn't he originated the plan? Wasn't he prepared now to handle all the business details? If Mr. Merkle didn't like the ten per cent he needn't accept it; Mr. Hope would consult another technical man.

The chemist, seeing that anger got him nothing, turned to appeal. He wheedled; he cajoled; he pleaded friendship—all to no avail. Ten per cent or nothing!

Then Mr. Merkle, seeing he was beaten, suddenly capitulated. "You could make it ten per cent," he said with a sigh. "But in writing; when you say it, with me it's no good any more—that ain't business."

And Mr. Hope, smiling triumphantly, wrote it out in due form.

Estelle's opera party that next evening was a great success. Jimmy found himself, to his great surprise, liking Estelle. She was different from any girl he had ever met. She made him feel small and inadequate, somehow, and he knew he would never quite lose the awe she inspired in him. But he liked her.

Estelle, on her part, liked Jimmy, mostly because it enhanced her own self-importance to feel how she must appear to him. And so, on the surface at least, they got along famously.

During the opera Jimmy's mind, in spite of his efforts, wandered from the stage. He found himself once looking back over his shoulder at the wonderful "horse-shoe" over his head—that long, curving line of boxes where the most brilliant ladies of the

world's greatest city were sitting now. In the dim light he could see the little spots of color that marked them. The great, crowded auditorium awed him a little; and he felt, too, a curious exaltation that he should be there—Jimmy Rand, of the Fallon Brothers Mine, a part of all this splendor.

He wished Anne could be with him, or could see him there, in his black evening clothes sitting between these two dainty girls. It seemed to symbolize success to Jimmy. He *was* a success; he *was* going up the ladder—making himself into somebody. He was conscious of a vague pride in what he had achieved already, and he would have liked Anne to have seen this tangible evidence of it, so that she might be proud, too.

It never occurred to Jimmy that the sight of him at that moment would have caused Anne any pain. Her letters to him had always been so tenderly proud of his great accomplishments. She was always so interested and pleased at his accounts of the things he did.

When he had seen her the last time, hardly a month before, Jimmy had not noticed, nor would he have understood, the new, wistful look that was in her eyes when she had told him timidly that he was "growing up into a—a real gentleman." Nor did he ever know that she cried over many of his letters before she sat down bravely to answer them.

Jimmy would have liked Anne to have seen him this night at the opera. He wrote her a glowing account of it the very next day. And little Anne replied that she was very glad, and proud of him; and in a postscript added simply: "I got the story of 'La Bohème' out of the library, and I read it, and I like it very much." The pathos of which was entirely lost to Jimmy.

In the office the following Monday morning George Cooper came to Jimmy in great excitement.

"You were right to be afraid of this guy, Hope," he announced without preface. "I just found out—quite by accident—he's bought himself a coal property up near Scranton."

"What—"

"Yes. I don't know what it means, either. Maybe nothing. He's got a right to buy himself anything he pleases, I suppose. But it looks suspicious. What does he want with it? From what I could learn, it's just the sort of place for your plan, too. Not a going coal mine; just a farm with abandoned borings on it. It looks suspicious, doesn't it?"

Jimmy agreed anxiously that it did. "We'd better see Mr. Wentworth right away, George."

"He's away," said the office manager. "He won't be back till Tuesday. We'll see him Wednesday or Thursday; we're all ready. Have you got that last analysis? Was it the same as the other?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Then we'll see him sure next week."

Luck was with Cooper and Jimmy that morning, although they didn't realize it then. Isaac Merkle happened to stroll past them at that moment. A sudden thought came to the office manager.

"There's Isaac Merkle, Jimmy. He's a chemist. Let's put him on this. He may be able to advise us on something we've overlooked. It can't hurt anything now. Wait, I'll call him over."

In spite of Jimmy's protest Cooper summoned Merkle. The little chemist sat down at the desk with them, and the office manager started to tell him Jimmy's idea. Mr. Merkle swallowed hard, with his eyes nearly popping from his head. Then he abruptly interrupted Mr. Cooper and began a series of swift questions, which threw both Jimmy and the office manager into utter confusion.

"Wait," said Mr. Merkle, when finally George demanded an explanation. "What was it the date when Mr. Rand came here?"

The office manager consulted a little card-file on his desk. "He started work on April 18—the next day after he first came in."

Mr. Merkle glanced at his little pocket note-book. Then without preamble or hesitation, and with direct words unusual to him, he told them all about his connection with Mr. Leffingwell Hope concerning this same idea.

"Well, I'll be damned," the office manager ejaculated, when he had recovered from his first astonishment.

Jimmy said nothing; but his lips were pressed very tight together; his face was very white, and both his fists were clenched. If Mr. Leffingwell Hope had chanced to pass by at that particular moment there would probably have been a considerable disturbance of the Monday morning office routine.

Mr. Merkle dwelt with minute detail upon his own innocence in the affair with Mr. Hope, as he had had no reason to suppose the idea had originated anywhere but with the secretary. He expanded also upon the dirty way in which he had been treated. He ended by pulling out his notebook again.

"I'm a methodical man, Mr. Cooper. Here is it the exact date Mr. Hope told me his scheme—April 17—the evening."

"And you told Hope about it that same morning, didn't you, Jimmy?"

Jimmy nodded; he was still too angry to speak.

"And Jimmy told it to me that same afternoon," the office manager went on; he felt the circumstances justified this slight inaccuracy. "So you can see it's a cinch where the idea originated, Mr. Merkle."

They compared notes still further. When the chemist mentioned that he and Hope were to interview Mr. Wentworth the next afternoon as soon as he returned from out of town, the office manager went up in the air.

"And we were going to let it go till Wednesday or Thursday!" Mr. Cooper whistled as he thought of their narrow escape. For if Hope had broached the subject first and claimed the idea as his own, it might have been difficult to disprove him. How lucky they had gotten hold of Merkle this particular morning! And how lucky, too, that the chemist was sore at Hope—and that he had jotted down the date of his first conversation with the secretary about the scheme.

Mr. Cooper brought his fist down on the desk with a thump. "We'll give this guy a run for his money. We'll see the boss Tuesday afternoon, right when he does, dammit, and have it out then and there.

The point is, Merkle, where do you stand?"

Mr. Merkle had decided that some minutes before. He was not by nature entirely averse to a crooked business deal—if it were not too crooked. But he had learned from experience that the best place to be, if you could choose, was on the winning side. And in this particular case his judgment told him very clearly which side that was.

"With you," said Mr. Merkle succinctly. "You could count on me."

CHAPTER VII.

JIMMY PLAYS TRUMPS.

THE unpleasant scene that fate seemed preparing for Mr. Wentworth in his office that Tuesday afternoon was avoided by the president's unexpected return on Tuesday morning. Mr. Leffingwell Hope, with his plans all carefully laid, had taken advantage of his employer's supposed absence, and stayed away on business of his own.

These two occurrences caused an eleventh-hour change in the plans of Jimmy and the office manager. Jimmy was for avoiding trouble if it were possible.

"Why not go right ahead now, just as if Hope wasn't in this at all?" he urged. They talked it over, and decided that would be the better way.

"He'll have a fine chance coming along all alone after us," Jimmy chuckled at the prospect. "Let's do it right now, George, if we can see Mr. Wentworth."

Mr. Wentworth would see them in half an hour. Then they hastily phoned Merkle; the chemist promised to hurry right down.

That half-hour of waiting was the hardest of Jimmy's life. He went over, seemingly for the hundredth time, all he planned to say to Mr. Wentworth; and he chewed down all his finger-nails. It was decided Jimmy was to do most of the talking; he wanted it that way; wanted to put the idea over himself.

The half-hour seemed interminable; but it was over at last, and again Jimmy found

himself in the president's office ready to tell his big idea.

This second interview with Mr. Wentworth was as different from the first as it well could be. For one thing, the president was in a more receptive mood than he would have been before. Six months had put him just that much nearer completion of his plans regarding the new factory for the making of optical glass. The site had not yet been selected; indeed, it looked as though finding a satisfactory one would prove a difficult task.

This time, too, Jimmy knew what he was going to talk about. He had the facts—and he had the ability now to present them forcibly and intelligently. Also he had George Cooper with him; and the technical knowledge of Isaac Merkle to call upon.

So Jimmy tackled the president with an assurance that lent force to his arguments. The office manager sat with his chair tilted back against the wall. Mr. Wentworth occupied his usual seat at his desk, and Jimmy faced him across it.

Jimmy had expected to ignore Mr. Leflingwell Hope and the part he had played, but the secretary was injected into the conversation almost immediately. Jimmy began by announcing that he realized Mr. Wentworth had not been impressed with his idea when he had heard it before. Then he went ahead and outlined it briefly.

Whereupon the president, with a directness characteristic of business men of his type, immediately rang his buzzer to summon Mr. Hope.

"Is this what you told my secretary that first morning you were here, Mr. Rand?"

"Why—why yes, sir—nearly the same," said Jimmy, surprised.

Mr. Hope's secretary announced that he had not come in that morning. The president frowned, tapping his desk with a lead pencil thoughtfully. Mr. Cooper, scenting something wrong, spoke up quickly.

"Pardon me, chief. There's something peculiar about this that you don't exactly understand. We'd rather not speak of it now; Mr. Rand just wanted you to consider his plan in relation to our new factory. This other matter—about Mr. Hope—we know a good deal about that, too,

but we'd rather let it go till some other time."

"Strange, very strange," said the president musingly.

"Mr. Hope *did* tell you what I wanted that day, didn't he?" Jimmy ventured.

"He told me about your mother's potential gas-well in—Alberta, I think it was."

Jimmy gasped. "Why—what—why, I never—"

Again Mr. Cooper interposed.

"Chief, listen," he began vigorously. "Here are the facts: Mr. Rand came into the company that morning to tell you what he has just told you. At your direction he told it to Mr. Hope."

"How do you know what he told Mr. Hope?" the president snapped.

"He repeated it all to me ten minutes afterward," declared the office manager unblushingly. "I was enthusiastic; I thought there was something in it. Then, later, when Mr. Hope reported that you were not interested, Rand and I thought we'd work it out together. That's what we've done, and now he's ready to ask your opinion of it again. That's all we know about it."

Mr. Cooper waved his hand to silence Jimmy, and went on swiftly:

"What Mr. Hope told you about it we don't know. Evidently he didn't describe it very accurately, but perhaps that was because he thought it unimportant, anyway. But Mr. Hope isn't here now to explain his actions if you think they need explanation. And, chief, I happen to know that he's coming in to consult you this afternoon on this very matter. That's a fact, chief, he is. You wait and hear what he has to say, then you'll understand it all. And Rand and I will both be here; just send for us if you want us."

The president stared searchingly at his two employees an instant. Then abruptly he resumed his former manner of attentive listening.

"Go on with your scheme, Mr. Rand; you interest me."

Jimmy suppressed with an effort the anger that this new proof of Mr. Hope's duplicity had aroused in him, and resumed:

"You understand, Mr. Wentworth," he

interrupted himself when he had been talking perhaps five minutes, "I'm not going to try and talk to you in technical language. I've only studied these engineering problems a little with George. I think I can make the thing clear in a general way, but I can't talk technically."

"I couldn't understand you very well if you did," the president observed. "That's always been up to my technical men."

"As I said, sir," Jimmy went on, "the—"

"The first problem is how you propose to burn the coal," Mr. Wentworth interrupted. "Tell me about that first."

Jimmy explained how they would bore down to the coal measures, just as borings are made in prospecting. "This would be a small vertical shaft," he added.

"How big in diameter?"

"About twelve or fourteen inches. Then this shaft would be lined with iron casing—"

"Like an oil-well," Mr. Cooper interjected.

The president nodded.

"At the top of this shaft we put a fan—just like the fan-house of a coal mine, only very much smaller—to blow the air down. This is the air-shaft; parallel with that we bore another just like it."

"How far away?" asked Mr. Wentworth.

"The distance wouldn't make much difference—say fifty feet," Mr. Cooper put in.

Again the president nodded.

Jimmy continued. "Then we blast a connection between the bottoms of the two shafts through the coal."

This the president discussed at some length. "Why not put the shafts closer together?" he finally asked.

"No reason that we can see," said Jimmy. "If they were closer it would make the connection down below easier. This second shaft is the one that brings up the gaseous products of combustion."

"We're going to use your regular regenerative furnace, or one something like it. We can get you producer gas that is just as good as any you're getting—from the coal we burn in the ground, if we control the air and steam right."

Although this was clear to Mr. Wentworth, it may perhaps need explanation here. In modern furnaces, for the fusion of glass or other operations where great heat is necessary, the process of combustion of the fuel is carried on, not in one operation, as it is in the simple furnaces with which every one is familiar, but in two distinct, separate, progressive stages.

The first stage takes place in a subsidiary furnace known as a "gas producer." Here part of the heat which the fuel is capable of generating is utilized for the production of a combustible gas. In other words the fuel is changed into gaseous form, but only partly burned.

A familiar example of this operation is seen in any ordinary fireplace when the fire is first lighted. There is at first an inadequate "draft." This supplies the fire with an insufficient amount of oxygen, and although the fuel—paper, for instance—is entirely volatilized it is not entirely burned; there is smoke, which, if it could be mixed with more air, and at a sufficiently high temperature, would burst into flame.

This was the process Jimmy proposed to carry on in the ground; that is, only partly to consume the coal by supplying it with an insufficient amount of oxygen. And it was the unburned coal-gases—the combustible smoke, in other words—that he proposed to pipe up to the furnace at the surface—not the actual heat. The burning mine, hundreds of feet down in the ground, was in effect to be his subsidiary furnace—his gas-producer.

These unburned gases, from the producer, pass, hot, into the furnace proper; either directly or sometimes after being conveyed a considerable distance—as they would have to be according to Jimmy's plan. In this latter event they cool off, but are heated up again by the waste heat of the furnace.

These hot gases, entering the main furnace, meet a current of hot air, also heated by the waste heat of the furnace. The combination of hot gas and hot air burns rapidly and completely, and yields very high temperatures if properly proportioned.

To the layman it may seem surprising that when part of the combustion of the

fuel takes place entirely away from the furnace—the heat of this combustion being completely wasted—that a far greater heat can subsequently be obtained. But it is a fact nevertheless.

“How would you start the fire in the ground?” suggested Mr. Wentworth.

“By dropping down incandescent coal,” Jimmy returned promptly. “And then blowing air to it. You see—”

The president raised his hand. “That’s only a detail. Then you really think you could approximate a gas-producer with this burning mine of yours?”

“Yes, sir. By forcing down the proper proportions of air and steam. You see, the hole in the burning coal-bed would gradually spread out. But that wouldn’t make any difference, because it would only have two outlets to the surface air, and both of them under control.”

“The lower ends of your casing would melt,” said Mr. Wentworth.

“What of it, chief?” Mr. Cooper interposed. “That wouldn’t hurt anything.”

The president considered. “No, I don’t suppose it would,” he admitted. “It’s an interesting idea, especially if it would work. Have you talked with any of our technical men? How about Merkle, seen him?”

“He has been—” Jimmy hesitated; then meeting Mr. Cooper’s warning glance, went on:

“Yes, sir; he’s been studying it. He says it can be done; he knows just how to do it.”

“Oh, he does?”

“Yes, sir. He’s outside now; we thought you might like to talk to him about it.”

“We’ll have him in at once.” The president reached for the button on his desk, but Jimmy stopped him.

“Just a minute, Mr. Wentworth—before you get Merkle. There’s another point I wanted to make.” Jimmy still had his trump card, and he thought this a good time to play it.

“We understand around the office that this new factory you’re planning is for the making of optical glass?”

The president inclined his head.

“And for optical glass you need a very good grade of sand; if it has less than one-

twentieth of one per cent of iron, and not more than that of other impurities, it is satisfactory?” Jimmy was quoting almost verbatim what he had carefully learned.

Mr. Wentworth nodded again; his growing surprise and admiration for Jimmy were evident from his expression.

“Well, sir, when I found that out, I thought of a sand-bank that’s on mother’s farm. It’s all sandy; that’s why it’s no good for a farm.” Jimmy took a little bottle from his pocket and laid it on the desk before the president.

“There’s some of the sand, Mr. Wentworth, I had it analyzed.” He produced a folded sheet of paper. “Here’s the analysis—over ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent pure silica.” He handed the paper to Mr. Wentworth.

“That’s mighty important, chief, as you know,” said Mr. Cooper earnestly. “If you’ve got the fuel and the sand, that’s pretty near everything, isn’t it?”

The president glanced at the paper and the little bottle of sand lying on his desk; then he sat up briskly.

“We’ll have Merkle in here at once; see what he says. You’re certainly interesting—mighty interesting. If it works—if it works—”

“It ’ll work, chief,” said Mr. Cooper confidently, as the president rang his buzzer to summon Isaac Merkle.

The conference with Mr. Merkle lasted over an hour. The little chemist, forgetting the unsavory circumstances under which he had been induced to begin work on Jimmy’s plan, plunged into a discussion of it with enthusiasm. His ideas, as he outlined them now to Mr. Wentworth, did not differ in any large essential from the way in which Jimmy had explained how it should be done.

Mr. Merkle was sure that coal burning under control in the ground could be made to yield gas of a very satisfactory quality. In his opinion the main furnaces that had already been decided upon for the new optical glass factory could be used, unchanged.

The president raised the question of the saving of the cost of coal; whereupon Mr. Merkle surprised Jimmy and George

Cooper greatly by producing a sheet of paper with it all figured out.

"Of course y' understand, Mr. Wentworth, I couldn't know what this coal property is going to cost you. But when you own it—here is the saving according to the estimate we made of the fuel consumption of this new factory. But, Mr. Wentworth, coal's going higher next year; it would be more than this."

Mr. Wentworth looked over the figures attentively. Then he showed the chemist the little bottle of sand on his desk, explaining briefly what Jimmy had told him about it. Mr. Merkle's eyes nearly popped from his head. Here was something he and Hope had never thought of. He waved his hands before him expressively.

"With that and producer gas next to nothing you got a cinch, Mr. Wentworth," he stated emphatically.

The interview ended with the president thoroughly convinced as far as he had gone. He declared himself intensely interested, and stated definitely that if the thing continued to work out theoretically as it seemed now it would—and as he himself admitted he thoroughly believed it would—he certainly would see that the company gave it a fair trial.

"Too good to pass up; we'd be the first in the field to use it, too." He chuckled to himself. "They'd never catch up with us."

The president then said he would go into the matter thoroughly with several of his technical men and the other officers of the company, after which the directors would pass upon it—only a technicality, for he'd "shove it through, whether they liked it or not," if he thought it feasible himself.

Then he shook hands with Jimmy, patted him on the back, and told him he was a "good boy." Jimmy had never been so happy before in his life. A great lump came up into his throat; he wanted to tell Mr. Wentworth how he appreciated the way he had been treated, but the words wouldn't come. He stood staring at the president dumbly, and was able finally only to mumble: "Thank you very much." After which Cooper clapped him on the

back and pulled him through the door into the outer office.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEMESIS.

IT was half an hour before Jimmy recovered sufficiently to talk the thing over quietly with the office manager. The very imagination that had troubled him for so many years—that had made his life as a coal-miner miserable, and finally had enabled him to conceive this idea—now descended upon him with overpowering force.

He forgot Mr. Hope—forgot the opposition to success that he had met—had still to meet. In his mind's eye the plan had already been adopted, put into execution. The factory was built; the coal, lying there all these years idle underneath his mother's farm, was burning, and yielding up its precious heat for the great furnaces. And he—Jimmy Rand, once only a mule-boy and miner in the Fallon Brothers mine—had done it all!

After a time he calmed down. First he must telegraph his mother and Anne; then he must arrange to go home for a day or two and see them. Since the man from whom he had to obtain permission to absent himself from work was Mr. Cooper, Jimmy had no difficulty in getting leave to go.

He settled that point quickly, and then went into one of the other offices to send his telegram.

At lunch that day, which the office manager, Jimmy and Mr. Merkle had together, Cooper planned what they should do that afternoon to settle Mr. Hope.

"Just let him alone," said Jimmy. "You don't have to do anything. He'll settle himself if you let him alone, can't you see that?"

Mr. Merkle was obviously worried. "What should I say if R. G. sends for me?" he wanted to know.

"Tell him the truth," said Jimmy. "That's the easiest thing you could do, isn't it? You've nothing to hide."

"And you make that date clear," added Mr. Cooper. "Just as you did to us. That's the big point—show him that Hope

told you the idea the evening of the same day Jimmy first came in here."

Merkle nodded.

"And when Hope comes to you after lunch now, don't you put him wise. You keep mum. Act just as if nothing had happened. Tell him you're ready to tell the chief all you know." Jimmy chuckled at the double meaning of this. "Just let him go ahead with his plans in his own way. He'll get his, all right, or I don't know a thing about the chief's methods."

The chemist nodded again emphatically. "He tried to pull that crooked business on me—that you couldn't do to Merkle and get away with it."

"And listen, Merkle"—the office manager laid his hand earnestly on the little chemist's arm—"there's going to be a lot of money in this if it goes through—plenty for everybody. I'll see you get what you earn—and that'll be a good slice. You know me, and you know the chief. You don't want *that* in writing, do you?" he finished with a grin as he remembered Merkle's account of his very last business transaction with the secretary.

Mr. Merkle offered his hand. "What you say it's like a government bond with me, Mr. Cooper," he declared emphatically.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope had his interview with the president, just as he had planned. He went in alone, directing Merkle to wait outside until he sent for him.

Mr. Wentworth listened with his customary attention to what his secretary had to say. His eyes narrowed, and his lower jaw came out a little when Mr. Hope stated specifically that the idea was his own; but he did not interrupt.

Mr. Hope was very brief. He merely set the salient features of the scheme before his principal; then he called in Mr. Merkle.

The chemist entered and seated himself silently; his face wore an expression of grim determination.

"Explain my idea to Mr. Wentworth, Merkle," said the secretary grandly, leaning back in his chair.

The chemist swallowed hard. This was an outcome he had not expected at all. He

looked at Mr. Wentworth, wondering whether he should go all over what he had already said just that morning, or whether he should make a clean breast of the whole matter. Before he could reach a conclusion the president took the decision entirely out of his hands.

"Mr. Merkle, how long have you been working on this?" Mr. Wentworth had not changed his easy position at his desk; but his voice now was very alert—low-toned, almost soft, but tense and vibrant. It was the real Mr. Wentworth talking now: the man of action; the forceful, dominant personality that had placed him where he was in the business world.

Mr. Leffingwell Hope noticed the change at once, and opened his eyes wide with surprise.

"Be exact, Mr. Merkle; I mean exactly what date, if you can tell, did Mr. Hope first consult you about this?"

The chemist pulled out his little notebook. "I'm a methodical man, Mr. Wentworth; the exact day it was April 17 last, in the evening."

"Thank you." The president jotted down the date, and reached for his telephone. "Mr. Cooper, please. Oh, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Wentworth speaking. What was the date upon which Mr. James Rand was first employed by us? Yes; April 18? Thank you. Was that the day after his first interview with me, according to your remembrance? Thank you."

The president jotted that down also, hung up the receiver, and turned briskly to his secretary.

"Mr. Hope, when you repeated to me that conversation you had on April 17 with Mr. Rand, did you repeat it correctly?"

"Why I—why, yes, sir, as near as I could remember it," stammered Mr. Hope.

"Thank you." The president rang his buzzer. "Ask Mr. Rand to step in here immediately."

The girl was back with Jimmy in less than a minute. The president did not ask him to sit down, so he stood just inside the door, looking from one to the other of the three men, and wondering what was about to happen.

"Mr. Rand, Mr. Cooper informs me

that you were first employed by this company on April 18 last."

"Yes, sir—I don't remember."

"His records show that. You do remember your first interview with me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it your remembrance that it occurred on the day before you started with us?"

"Yes, sir; I'm sure of that."

"When you left me that morning, you went directly into Mr. Hope's office?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you told him the business that you had wanted to tell me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it what you told me this morning—in substance, I mean?"

"Why, yes, sir, of course."

"Did you mention a gas-well in Alberta?"

"No, sir."

"Has your mother any property in Alberta?"

"No, sir."

"Thank you." Mr. Wentworth turned again to his secretary. Mr. Hope had paled visibly.

"Half an hour after you dismissed Mr. Rand you repeated his conversation to me, Mr. Hope. It is my remembrance that it concerned a natural-gas strike in Alberta, near property held by this young man's mother. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir, I—yes, as near as I can remember it," said Mr. Hope.

"You said nothing to me about burning coal without mining it. I assume he said nothing to you along those lines."

"No, sir, he did not." Mr. Hope answered more firmly this time.

"Just a moment, Mr. Rand." Jimmy's anger was proving too much for him; he had taken a step forward toward Mr. Hope, with his fists clenched.

The president went on swiftly:

"Thank you, Mr. Hope. I think I understand the circumstances now. You may go, gentlemen." The president indicated Mr. Merkle and Jimmy.

"Mr. Hope," he went on, when they were alone, "for some years you have been my secretary. I have had no cause to criticize your work unduly, nor do I think

I have treated you unfairly as an employer.

"What has just transpired needs no additional words between us. It is entirely self-evident. Explanations are futile, re-
criminations idle. As you know, Mr. Hope, integrity of character is one thing this company demands above all else. For a person without it there can be no place in this organization. I must ask you therefore to let me have your resignation, to take effect immediately."

Mr. Hope stood up. He hesitated an instant, then met the president's eyes squarely.

"Very well, sir. If that is what you wish, you shall have it at once."

Then with a punctilious little bow, he turned and left the office.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAINSPRING OF ENDEAVOR.

ONE morning, some two years after Mr. Leffingwell Hope was thus summarily dismissed from the Wentworth company, Mr. James Rand, assistant general manager of the Wentworth Optical Glass Company, was seated in the private office of Robert G. Wentworth, president of the parent organization.

They had been two eventful years to Jimmy. For five months after his momentous second interview with the president, the technical men of the company had worked on the plan, making endless experiments. Then there was the investigation of Mrs. Rand's property. Additional borings were made. The coal measures were estimated as to quantity and extent, and the sand was similarly valued.

With Jimmy's mother the company dealt in a strictly businesslike manner. Her property was purchased. She received an adequate amount in cash, and a substantial block of stock in the new company.

Then the legal department of the company took the matter up, and innumerable applications for patents covering the special apparatus that had been devised were made.

Then the board of directors of the Wentworth company met, and plans for the

organizing and financing of a new company were outline.

Jimmy had not realized there were so many technical, legal, and financial things in the world to do, let alone apply them all just to one project—and especially to *his* project.

Jimmy, of course, had taken no active part in all this; but Mr. Wentworth seemed desirous of having him in touch with it all, and he was present at most of the conferences.

During all this time Jimmy had continued in the employ of the Wentworth Company, and at the end of the first year his salary was fifty dollars a week. He no longer answered correspondence, but at the president's suggestion devoted his entire time to learning all there was to know about the glass business—the making of optical glass particularly.

Then one day Mr. Wentworth had handed him a neat little stock-certificate assigning to him an equal number of shares in the new company with his mother. At the same time he was informed that his position with this subsidiary company would be that of assistant general manager, at a yearly salary of eight thousand dollars—which, Mr. Wentworth said, patting him on the back, "For a kid like you, is going some."

Mr. Cooper and Isaac Merkle both received stock, and the former a position with the new company also.

So matters stood when at last the new factory was put into successful operation. And thus, from the brain of Jimmy Rand, coal-miner in the Fallon Brothers' mine, came into being the first of the new factories for the utilizing of coal without mining it. Coal was still mined, of course, for the world had thousands of uses for it besides the needs of factories. But Jimmy's big idea used coal that never could have been mined. And it postponed, for many years, that inevitable day when the world's coal supply was finally to come to an end.

Mr. James Rand smiled cheerfully at his president, this morning in Mr. Wentworth's office, and the president, lighting himself another cigar, smiled cheerfully back at his youthful protégé.

"You always thought you were going to put it over, didn't you, Jimmy?" Mr. Wentworth was saying.

Jimmy's smile broadened to a grin. He looked fully six years older than when he had first come to New York, a trifle heavier, and infinitely more sophisticated; but he still had his ingenuous manner.

"Yes, sir, I did," he admitted.

The president eyed him with affectionate appraisal. "You're a pretty smart kid—in some ways."

"They've been telling me that so much I'm getting to believe it," said Jimmy.

Mr. Wentworth paused. Then, with a quizzical smile, "You'll be getting married I suppose, now that you've got a start in life."

The telephone rang sharply, and the incident closed. But it was enough for Jimmy. With sudden realization he saw how foolish—how unfair, perhaps—he had been. For during these past two years, since that first morning Mr. Cooper introduced them, he and Estelle had become very good friends.

He had found the president's daughter, when he got to know her better, quite a likable girl; he was ashamed of his first impression of her. As a matter of fact, Estelle was no different than she ever had been, or ever would be. But Jimmy soon became the most promising young man in her father's company, if not of her entire acquaintance. She did not exactly "set her cap for him"—she was too proud for that—but she did seek his society upon every possible occasion.

Jimmy had always imagined somehow that Estelle knew all about Anne; but now he realized, with a sudden shock of surprise, that she didn't—couldn't—for certainly he could never remember any specific occasion when he had mentioned Anne—either to Estelle or to anybody else. His love for Anne had always seemed so sacred, so far removed from his business life in the city, that the impulse to tell of it never had come to him.

But now he suddenly found himself wondering what Estelle thought of him. And that led him to consider what Anne might have been thinking also. Dear little

Anne! He had loved her so much always that he had sometimes forgotten to tell her much about it. Instead, he had described the wonderful business things that were happening to him—his life in the city.

And the things he and Estelle were doing—the opera, the theaters, and all that—he had told it all to Anne with a great personal pride, because it seemed to typify his own success.

How Anne must have felt! Jimmy felt himself very small and mean when his reflections reached this point. He had thought he had learned a lot; but he could see now there were many, many things in life he had yet to learn.

Jimmy took the train for Menchon that same afternoon. He stayed there three days. They were the three most important and wonderful days in his whole life, notwithstanding the wonderful things that had already happened to him.

On the afternoon of the fourth day he was back again in New York, and in Mr. Wentworth's office. But this time he was not alone, for he held firmly by the hand the shyest, prettiest, dearest little girl in all the world.

Anne was dressed in a smart little tailor-made suit. She wore her hair up now, but her face still had that startled, shy look that always made her seem, to Jimmy, anyhow, just like a sweet, half-frightened little child.

Jimmy was somewhat a privileged character by this time in the Wentworth company, and he entered Mr. Wentworth's office without much ceremony. It so happened that at that moment its only two occupants were the president and his daughter.

Just inside the doorway Jimmy paused abruptly, with an apology on his lips. Anne stood close beside him, holding tight to his arm.

What Jimmy said by way of introduction is unimportant. But he finished with:

"And—and this is Anne—I mean my—my wife—Mrs. Rand. We were married yesterday. And—and now we're going away for a month—we're going to disappear. I wanted to tell you so you'd know where I was. And I wanted you both to meet Anne."

He paused an instant, looked down into Anne's adoring eyes, that stared up into his face just as they always used to, and went on with a rush:

"You think I've put over something big with this company, don't you, Mr. Wentworth? You've said so, anyway. Well, I never would have been able to do it only for Anne; she made me want to do it. She deserves all the credit.

"You'll have to thank her, Mr. Wentworth."

And since all his life Jimmy believed that to be so, it probably was.

(The End.)

THE GARDEN OLD

THE garden old where first we met
 Was redolent of mignonette,
 Of honeysuckle white and red,
 And myrtle vines that trailed and spread
 Above the wall grown violet.
 When roses with the dew were wet
 Or in the twilight's silhouette,
 We sought through lovers' paths to tread
 The garden old.

Though life's long day has nearly set,
 It casts no shadows of regret;
 For though the light of youth has fled,
 And blossoms of the earth are dead,
 My love and I can ne'er forget
 The garden old.

Clifford Howard.



New Stuff for Elliot

by Raymond J. Brown

OLD Giles is actin' the brutal employer as I come into the office. The inkstand, pen, papers and other scenery, that he keeps on his desk to impress clients is jumpin' around like alive, due to the trip-hammer wallops he's deliverin' to his blottin' pad. His face is screwed up into an expression like the villain wears in a movie serial, and out of his mouth is issuin' a stream of speech that would bring the blush of shame to the modest cheek of a coal-barge skipper.

If he'd been usin' them same words to any other man in the world but Ed Taylor, he'd have been pasted in the eye, strangled and jumped on. Ed, though, is listenin' like the boss was deliverin' the lecture that went with a set of colored slides of the Holy Land.

Well, I suppose the boss has got to get it off his chest to somebody. Him, Ed and me make up the Giles Confidential Detective Agency.

He knows perfectly well I won't take no lip from him, so Ed's got to act the appreciative audience every time old Giles feels an oration strainin' in his throat. But anyhow—

The subject under discussion—from what I can make out as I slip through the door—is a matter of some four hundred dollars that Ed was supposed to collect, and fell down on.

You know that's one of our grafts—collectin' bum debts for people on a commission. It seems Ed had been give a

bill of four hundred to collect for Flubb & Company, the instalment-plan furniture people, who are our steadiest clients in the collectin' line. He'd been monkeyin' around for two weeks and hadn't even been able to report progress. Since Ed is paid five a day and expenses, and since ten per cent of the bill—forty bucks—was all the agency could possibly get out of the case, the boss figured he had a kick comin'—and he was deliverin' it, I'll say!

"You pig-snouted, snivelin' loon!" he called Ed. "You ain't got sense enough to wind a watch! You couldn't make a livin' bailin' water out of the ocean at a dollar a pint! If a cop found you dead, he wouldn't take the trouble to report it! Your skull is filled with putty! Outside of a gold cigar-cutter you're the most useless thing in the world! Two weeks you've spent on this case—two weeks; and you ain't brought in a nickle! You ain't even tried! You—"

"Aw, boss!" protests Ed weak-like. "I—"

"Shut up!" yelps the boss. "You ain't tried, I said! If you'd tried hard, this guy would've kicked you down-stairs—and he ain't done it! You can't show a single burise for your two weeks' work!"

That's old Giles! He sits in a swivel chair, smokin' cigars, with his feet on the desk, and Ed and me can't tell him we're workin' unless we bring home the bacon or a few scars to prove an honest effort!

"Joe Conner," says the boss, and I hang

my head humble-like when I hear my name, "Joe would have got this money in ten minutes!"

"Huh!" grunts Ed.

"He would!" insists the boss, heavin' rosebuds and confetti at me because he don't know I'm there listenin'. Joe's a worker; he delivers the goods. He's clever—and smart. He's the kind of a young feller that gets along—a hustler! He ain't no cigarette-smokin' half-wit!"

"He smokes more cigarettes than me!" grumbled Ed.

"Yeah!" snorts the boss. "But they don't hurt him! That's the difference! If I was to give Joe this case—"

"Well, there he is," says Ed, pointin' to me. "Why don't you give it to him?"

The boss whirls around and spots me.

"Huh!" he growls. "There you are, eh? A fine pair of helpers I got—you and this scarecrow! I was just tellin' this pin-headed boob that neither one of you is worth a dime a day to me. A fine pair to draw to!" he whines. "A loafer"—he points to me as he says this—"and a lunatic!"—indicatin' Ed.

"I heard what you said about me," I grin.

"Listenin', eh?" he barks. "Listenin' to my private conversations? You—sneak! What right 've you got to gum-shoe into this office and listen in on my private affairs? You got to stop this—"

"I didn't gum-shoe in," I tell him. "I could hear you roarin' in the street."

"Well, it ain't right," he says, meanin' what I don't know. "It's got to stop! Let that be settled! Here!" he explodes, makin' a dive into his desk and comin' out with a blue card. "Get this money!"

"Full o' pep to-day, ain't you, boss?"

"No sarcasm! Cut it out!" he growls, turnin' to his desk and pretendin' to be busy with some letters.

I give Ed the nod and he follows me out of the office.

"We ought to put him on the screen," I say, pointin' back to the boss. "Ain't he a riot?"

"He's a fierce man!" exclaims Ed, meanin' it, too! "I'm glad you come in just then, Joe; you saved me my job."

Poor Ed! Who could be unkind to a simp like him?

"This," I say, holdin' up the blue card, "is this what started the war?"

"Uhuh," says Ed.

"A typical Flubb & Company valentine!" I describe the card after lookin' it over and it was.

A guy named Mortimer Elliot had nicked Flubb & Company for some four hundred and a half's worth of household goods in 1908 and had dodged payin' instalments ever since by the simple trick of movin' every time the collectors located him. Of course, legally, the bill wasn't worth a one-cent stamp. It had been put in its little grave by the statute of limitations in 1914. Which is why we were given it to collect on a commission. If the account was still alive, Flubb & Company would have collected it themselves by process of law—a judgment against Mortimer Elliot and then some dough from him or they'd seize the furniture.

"Does this Mortimer Elliot guy know the account is dead?" I ask Ed.

"No," says Ed. "He's just a hard-shell—a dead beat."

"You've tried all the stuff—threatened to arrest him, and all of that?"

"He gave me the laugh when I pulled them," says Ed. "Told me I was the eighteenth guy he'd heard sing the same tune. 'Why don't you collectors ever have any new stuff?' he asked me. So I told him I'd burn his house down if he didn't pay."

"You're some original gink!" I grin. "I'll bet that scared him?"

"No," says simple; "he handed me a newspaper and a match and told me to go ahead."

"Why didn't you?" I inquire.

"Aw, I was only foolin'," says Ed.

"Never fool," I advise him, "where money is concerned. So this guy wants some new stuff?" I say like to myself.

"That's what he told me," murmurs Ed.

"He'll get it!" I promise. "I hear," I add, "that this Mortimer Elliot is a big husky with yellow hair."

"No," says Ed. "He's a small feller and hair is what he ain't got."

"Ed," I remark, "you've knowed me for quite a few years. Tell me, please, who I am."

"Why—why—" stuttered Ed, lookin' at me like he suspected I'd suddenly gone soft, like himself, "why, you're Joe Connor."

"Not until further orders I ain't!" I contradict him. "I'm *Sheriff* Conner. Got that? Sheriff—s-h-e-r-e-f. Let me hear you say it."

"Sheriff," he says.

"Say 'yes, sir,'" I bid him.

"Yes, sir," he repeats.

"Letter perfect!" I compliment him. "Well, that's the dope. You're to call me 'sheriff' and to say 'yes, sir' and 'no, sir' and obey orders."

"Why?" he asks.

"It's new stuff for Elliot," I explain.

"That's all I'll tell you."

"Well, at seven o'clock that night, that bein' the time Ed informed me Elliot usually was through with his supper, me and Ed are to be seen and heard knockin' on the door of Elliot's flat. Said flat is situated in the Fifties on the wrong side of Eighth Avenue on the top deck but one of a five-story tenement.

Elliot himself answers us. He is, as Ed so completely described him, a little feller and hair is what he ain't got. What he has got, though, is a mean-lookin' thin face, a beak like a parrot and a grin that would remind you of a poisoner preparin' the fatal dose.

"Well?" he snaps, eyin' me up and down.

"Is this the man, Mr. Taylor?" I ask Ed.

"Yes, sheriff," replies Ed, grabbin' his cue perfect.

"Sheriff!" gasps Elliot.

"Mr. Taylor here," I tell him, "reports that you've refused to pay a certain bill which he's tried to collect. What's the bill, Mr. Taylor?"

"Four hundred and six dollars, sheriff," says Ed. "Owin' to Flubb & Company for furniture."

"H'm," I grunt. "Well, Mr. Elliot," I say, "this is a serious matter. I want to warn you to be careful about what you say in my presence. Be especially careful

about your constitutional rights. Yes, sir, your constitutional rights are what you've got to be careful about."

"What's them?" asks Elliot.

"Oho!" I exclaim. "You don't know, eh? That's really too bad. That explains everything, Mr. Taylor," I say to Ed.

Ed nods wise-like, although, of course, he had no more idea what I was talkin' about than Elliot did—or I did myself. Elliot, though, was weakenin'. He's blinkin' and starin' at me, and his lips is quiverin' with an effort to say somethin'.

"Why," I bellow at him so sudden that he jumps a foot, "why don't you pay, Mr. Taylor? Be careful what you say!" I warn him before he can speak. "Are you goin' to pay?" I roar as he stands there stutтерin' and winkin'.

"N-no!" he stammers brazen-like. "I ain't!"

I turn to Ed with a sad smile.

"Mr. Taylor," I say, "you win your case. This person has declared before a witness—me—that he don't intend to pay. Now I can do nothin' but my duty. Follow me, Mr. Taylor."

I brush by Elliot into the flat, Ed followin'. When I'm inside I take out a match and light every gas jet in sight. Then I draw from my pocket some papers which cost me twelve cents at a law stationer's that afternoon. I'd plastered big red seals on them to make them look more dangerous than they would ordinarily. Elliot's eyes nearly prop from his head when he sees them.

"You wanted new stuff, huh?" I think. "You're gettin' it, old kid!" To Elliot I say: "Well, sir, have you got your bondsman?"

"B-bondsman!" he gasps.

"He hasn't even got a bondsman, Mr. Taylor!" I tell Ed in a tone that says I consider it a crime that's almost worth a jail sentence. "Well," I sigh, "we'll have to get along without one. Take this, Mr. Taylor," I order Ed, handin' him the top paper from my package. "Let's see your list," Mr. Taylor.

"List?" repeats Ed.

"That blue card," I explain, and Ed gives it to me. "Now, we're ready," I

say, fishin' into a back pocket and pullin' out a handkerchief, at the same time causin' a pair of handcuffs which had been layin' in old Giles's desk for years to fall to the floor.

I'm payin' no attention to Elliot, but out of the corner of my eye I can see him reel on his feet as the handcuffs hit the carpet. He's absolutely stupefied. If I had come into his flat blusterin' and threatenin' he'd prob'ly have give me the laugh, just like he did to Ed Taylor and the other collectors who'd been pullin' the rough stuff on him for twelve years, but the lodge-room hokum got under his skin. You could see from his face he wouldn't have been a bit surprised if Ed and me had fallen on him and dragged him off to jail.

"All right, Mr. Taylor," I sing out. "Write these down—one table, four chairs, one side board—"

"Wha-what you doin'?" queries Elliot.

"—two rugs, one talkin' machine, one statue of Venus," I continue. Then I suddenly stop. "You explained to this man, didn't you, Mr. Taylor," I inquire, "that by-payin' a little on account he could stop all this?"

"Oh, yes, sheriff!" declares Ed, writin' away like a stenographer.

I made the remark careless—like, but it was my big play. If I could scare Elliot into payin' even one buck on account, my work was done. For the payment would bring to life Elliot's dead account with Flubb & Company and let the furniture-people recover their money, or their furniture, by law. And, by the arrangement old Giles had with Flubb & Company, we got our commission then just like we'd collected every cent that was due on the furniture.

Elliot shifts from one foot to the other, and shoots a hand into a pants pocket. What he hauls out, though, is only a handkerchief. Seein' I have him worried, I stop makin' my list and turn to him.

"Mr. Elliot," I say, "my time's valuable. I don't want to go along wastin' it by checkin' over this furniture if you're goin' to pay somethin' to Mr. Taylor. Tell me now if you intend to pay somethin' and I'll—"

"I got no money," says Elliot nervous-like. Then his mean little face wrinkles up suspicious. "Suppose I don't pay nothin'," he asks me, "what then?"

I'll admit he had me. In dopin' out the little one-act play me and Ed was performin' for his benefit, I hadn't gone no further than the scene that was then bein' acted. I had took it for granted that the handcuffs, and the sealed papers, and the title of sheriff would be enough to scare him into comin' through with some jack.

"Aha!" I exclaim, lookin' at him with pity. "You don't know what happens to you if you don't pay?"

"No, I don't," he says.

"What d'you think of that, Mr. Taylor?" I ask Ed. "He don't know what he's layin' himself in for by not payin'!"

"Tut, tut, tut!" clicks Ed with his tongue, shakin' his head.

"I ain't paid nothin' in twelve years," says Elliot stubbornlike, "and there ain't never nothin' happened."

"You never had a sheriff around before, did you?" I ask him.

"No," he says, "I never did."

"Ha!" I say. "That's it! Well, Mr. Taylor—one sofa, one pitcher of Washin'ton Crossin' the Delaware, one bed-spring—"

"Hey, wait!" requests Elliot. "You ain't told me—"

"Pleese, don't interrupt!" I bark at him, givin' him a cold and fishy eye. "One pianner stool, one lib'ry table—"

"This is my house," proclaims Elliot. "I demand to know—"

"Listen, you!" I roar at him. "Quit buttin' in. You're interferin' with the law in its course. Now, about this bein' your house—what you say may be true, but this furniture ain't yours. It's goin' back to the people it belongs to."

"How?" he asks.

"Mr. Taylor and me," I tell him, "are goin' to fit it with wings and let it fly back. How'd you think it was goin' back? We'll get a van as soon as my list's made up."

"But if I give you some money—" he suggests, and the sneaky smile that come over his face told me what was in his mind. He'd come through with a buck or so to

stall us off, and then—zip! He'd move. Not a wonderful system exactly, but he prob'ly found it cheaper than buyin' furniture.

"If you give Mr. Taylor some money," I inform him, "we'll be convinced of your honesty and we'll get out."

"Well, I ain't got no money," says Elliot. "My wife carries the dough for the family. She's out now, but, when she comes back—"

"We'll take no chances, Mr. Taylor," I tell Ed. One hatrack, two glass vases, one—"

I stop with the next item, whatever it was, on my lips; for the door of the flat suddenly opens and in pops the lady who carried the money for Elliot's household.

One glance at her and you seen the reason she carried the money; also, you were given reason to suspect why Elliot had dodged payin' Flubb & Company for twelve years. The missus was a cute little thing, about five foot eleven, and weighin' not an ounce less than a hundred and ninety. She had a sweet, kind expression to her face—like a river-front bartender of the old days, and it became even more so as she spots us.

"Mortimer Elliot," she addresses our host, "who're these men?"

"A sheriff," says Elliot, "and a collector for Flubb."

"Put them out!" screams the missus. "We ain't goin' to be bothered by—"

"Now, madam," I say, usin' my softest tone, we're here doin' our duty. It's a 'painful duty, I'll admit, but it's got to be done. Your husband, bein' an intelligent man—"

"Huh!" she snorts.

"—an intelligent man," I go on, "has seen there wasn't no use of fightin' with us, and he said you'd give us some money when—"

"Money!" she gasps. Give you—money!"

"Just a little," I tell her, "a dollar or so. Otherwise, I'll have to help Mr. Taylor here take this furniture away—"

"You'll—what!" she yelps. "You'll take my furniture away?"

"Not your furniture, madam, "I remind her, "until it's paid for."

"It's my furniture!" she screeches. "Every stick is mine—and I'll kill the man that lays a hand on it!"

"Well, madam," I inform her, "you can duck the necessity for committin' murder by payin' Mr. Taylor—"

"Not a cent!" she snaps. "The idea! You!" she calls Elliot. "This is your fault! If you'd been half a man you'd have thrown these fellers down stairs instead of—"

"Them two big guys?" cuts in Elliot. "Me—throw them down-stairs."

"Now, listen, lady," I say. "There ain't nothin' you can gain by actin' rough. We're here for one of two things—money or furniture. If we don't get one, why, we got to take the other."

She strides over to the doorway, takes a firm hold on the back of a chair and glares at me with a sort of a sneakin' little smile at the corners of her mouth.

"Well, young man," she says, "there's no money comin' to you. Go ahead and take the furniture. Well, why don't you take it?" she asks me, her grin gettin' wider when I don't move. "I won't hurt you—much!" she promises, heftin' the chair she's holdin' in a way I don't like at all.

"Why, I—I got to do this thing legal," I tell her. "Mr. Taylor and me ain't furniture movers. We—"

"Go get your movers!" she bids me. "I'll be waitin' for them—right here!"

Ed Taylor starts slidin' toward the door. "You got sense, young man!" the missus laughs at him. "You're gettin' out o' here before I start things."

"Mrs. Elliot," I say, "you're actin' in a highly—er—unladylike manner."

"But I notice I'm keepin' my furniture," she grins.

"You are only puttin' things off," I tell her. "The day of reckonin' is upon you. To-morrow—"

"Well, what about to-morrow?" she inquires when I pause.

"To-morrow," I say, "I—I—I—"

"I'm listenin'," she tells me.

"To-morrow," I repeat, ready to tell her anything just so long as it will let me get out of her flat with my health, "I—I—I—I'm goin' to sell this furniture at auction,"

is the first thought that comes comes to me, and I say it.

"Sell it at auction!" she exclaims. "You're—"

"Yes, ma'am," I nod. "Now, you wouldn't like this whole neighborhood plastered up with notices of the auction, would you? You wouldn't want all your neighbors to know that your furniture's bein' sold for debt?"

"Gee, Emily," says Elliot, "we can't have—"

"Shut up!" yelps the head of he house. "Young man," she tells me, "plaster away. You won't bother me none."

"You'd rather have an empty house," I say, "than pay a couple of dollars—"

"I've said all I'm goin' to," she informs me, liftin the chair a couple of inches.

"Come along, Mr. Taylor," I tell Ed, who's already slipped through the door and is waitin' at the top of the stairs. "Madam," I sing back over my shoulder, "I'm sorry for you."

"You needn't be!" she snaps. "I can take care of myself."

She slams the door, and, as Ed and me sneak down the stairs, we can hear her raisin' hob with her spouse for lettin' us into the house in the first place.

"Ed," I say when we made the front stoop, "I've always done right by you, ain't I?"

"I don't get you," says Ed.

"Battlin' Annie back there," I explain, pointin' up-stairs with my thumb. "Why didn't you tell me I had her to deal with?"

"She's a new one on me," says Ed. "She was never around any time I called."

"Well, she was there to-night—with both feet!" I say ferventlike.

"I guess the job's off," comments Ed like he was relieved.

"Off—nothin'!" I tell him. "I ain't even begun on that pair!"

"But she won't pay nothin'," objects Ed, "and she won't let him pay nothin'."

"She may feel different when she sees that furniture goin' out of her flat stick by stick," I predict.

"You don't mean to say you'd have the nerve to—"

"Ed," I say, "that auction sale I spoke

of to help us with the getaway has given me an idea."

I take from Ed the list of furniture he's made, write "Auction Sale for Debt" across the top of it, and attach it to the front door of the house with four red seals.

"That'll never scare that dame none!" says Ed, shakin' his head.

"Maybe not," I admit, "but I'm thinkin' she'll take it real serious when she sees the sale go through."

"Sale!" exclaims Ed. "You can't pull off no sale."

"I know I can't, but I'm goin' to."

"But who'll you get to buy the stuff? That dame'll just pull your sign down as soon as she sees it, and, when we come back, there won't be nobody here but ourselves."

"Oh, won't there!" I laugh. "Will you take an even money bet for ten bucks that I don't sell everything in that flat that belongs to Flubb & Company and have it loaded on a van at this time to-morrow night?"

Ed looked at me puzzled.

"What's the dope, Joe?" he wants to know.

I tell him. It was a neat plan, I thought, especially since I'd made it up while we were standin' there on the stoop. The followin' night me and Ed was to return to Elliot's flat. With us was to be one van and a set of huskies. We was to enter the flat, and, before the Elliots had recovered from their surprise at the mob scene, I was to sell the furniture to the huskies. Piece by piece as they'd buy it they was to move it out, and by the time the Elliots woke up to the fact that they'd just been treated to a demonstration of the old game of furniture pullin', the stuff would be in Flubb & Company's warehouse, our agency would have its commission and the Elliots could squawk and be hanged to them.

Ed dug up the supers from among a hard gang he hangs out with. There was eight of them, and the crew of four that went with the van I got from Flubb & Company.

I held a little rehearsal of the sale around the corner from Elliot's house.

"Boys," I told Ed's goofer friends,

"speed is absolutely necessary in the raid we're about to conduct. We got to get all that stuff out of the flat before it occurs to anybody to call a cop. Every article has got to be sold on the second bid, and the guy that buys it has got to start downstairs with it as soon as I say 'sold!' Have you got me? All right; let's try it. What am I offered for this handsome parlor clock?"

"One dollar," says one guy.

"Two!" screeches all the rest of the gang.

"Sold to you," I say, pointin' to one feller. "That's the idea!"

Well, fourteen strappin' young fellers like me and my army ain't goin to walk through the halls and up the stairs of a ordinary flat house without attractin' a little attention. We didn't cause no more of a sensation than an alarm of fire would.

Doors began to open all over the place and out of them popped flat-dwellers of all sizes and descriptions. There were men in undershirts, women in kitchen dress and young folks dolled up to go out. "What? Why? How?" and similar questions was bein' uttered on all sides, and, prob'ly figgerin' that it was the best and easiest way of satisfyin' their curiosity, the Elliot's neighbors fell in behind us and joined our parade.

I grinned when I saw that. Things were breakin' right. The sight of the familiar faces of the people who lived in the same of satisfyin' their curiosity, the Elliots more than any words I could utter that the sale was on the level.

The Elliot's were waitin' for us at the door. They had been attracted by the thunderin' footsteps of my crew just like everybody else in the house. The missus makes a try at haltin' the parade, but the rush was too great. I slip by her into the flat, the rest press after me and she's swept back to the wall.

She's game, though.

"How dare you?" she screeches at me. How dare you force your way into my home? Mortimer Elliot," she orders her husband, "put these people out!"

Elliot sees an openin' and loses himself in the crowd.

"Madam," I say, "violence will avail you nothin'. I am here to do my duty, and I will do it no matter what. However," I add, "I will give you one more chance. If you will pay Mr. Taylor—" }

"Get out of my house!" she screams. "Ain't there no man here who will kick this thug down-stairs for me?" she asks the general gatherin'.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I announce, hoppin' on a chair, "I am here to sell certain articles of furniture to pay a debt for over four hundred dollars owed by Mortimer Elliot to Flubb & Company. Please—everybody inside," I request, fearin' that the big mob in the hall will prevent my strong arms from gettin' away with the loot. "The first article I have to offer," I say, when the hall is clear, "is a beautiful pitcher of apples, grapes and peaches. There it is on the wall," I point. "What am I bid?"

"One buck!" screech three or four of my assistants.

"Two bucks!" yell the rest.

"Sold!" I declare, clappin' my hands together.

There's a slight misunderstandin' among the goofers as to who's to have the honor of carryin' out the first article. In fact, three of them are on the verge of blows, but Ed Taylor straightens the tangle out and the pitcher comes down from the wall.

"Now, we have a set of four dinin'-room chairs—" I begin.

"Eight dollars!" shouts one of the gang.

"Nine!" bellows another.

"Sold!" I start to say, but a woman right under my chair beats me to it.

"Ten!" she yells.

I nearly fell off the chair. This was a possibility that I'd overlooked entirely—the neighbors buttin' in on the biddin'! When they'd started to follow us up the stairs I was glad—their presence supplied local color—but that any of them should take the sale as bein' on the level, and start to pick up some bargains—

"Madam," I say to the woman, "you're too late. That gentleman there gets the chairs."

"But I said ten dollars—" she objects.

"I know you did, madam," I acknowl-

edge, "but not until I'd sold the articles to another bidder. I'm very sorry."

"Here's the money," she insists, producing a roll from under her apron.

"That's all very well," I tell her, "but—"

"Hey!" shouts a brawny guy in the rear of the room. "What kind of a brace game is this sale? I heard Mrs. Potter bid ten bucks—"

"So did I!" butt in a group of neighbors.

I do some quick thinkin'.

"Sir," I say to the goofer who'd bid nine bucks, "are you satisfied to let this lady's bid stand?"

"Sure!" he grins.

I knew he would be; so was I. With the imaginary money my gang was biddin' I was sure no money that the neighbors could produce would be enough to buy a single article.

"All right," I say. "The lady bids ten dollars. Ten dollars—are you all through at ten dollars?"

I pause to give one of my assistants a chance to put in a higher bid. Not a sound does one of them utter.

"Ten dollars," I repeat. "Ten dollars. Will anybody bid twenty?" I ask, givin' the wink to one of my helpers.

My suggestion passes right over his head.

"Will anybody bid fifteen?" I beg, tryin' to get Ed Taylor's eye and signal him to have one of his friends bid the chairs in.

"Will you bid twelve dollars?" I ask, pointin' to the feller who'd started the biddin'.

"Me?" he asks. "I thought you said—"

"Ten dollars! Ten dollars!" I roar to drown his question, which I fear will give the whole game away. "Who'll bid eleven? Who'll bid eleven? Who'll bid ten-fifty?" "Ten-fifty!" comes a voice from the back.

"Sold!" I yell, and then I kick myself as I realize that it wasn't one of my own gang who'd made the offer, but one of the flat-dwellers.

The feller who'd made the bid starts toward my chair, diggin' in his pocket.

"Er, just a minute!" I say. "This last biddin' wasn't regular. The gentleman who made the last bid ain't entitled to them chairs."

"Why ain't I?" demands the bird I spoke of.

"The articles was sold once before," I say. "I got to carry on this sale legal. If I don't—"

"If I don't get them chairs," cuts in the feller who'd bid ten-fifty, "there ain't goin' to be no more sale!"

"That's the boy, Tom! Stick to it! Don't let him skin you!" come the encouragin' shouts from his neighbors.

"Aw, gimme the money!" I tell the man. "And take your chairs to blazes out of here!"

On the level, I was worried. I didn't know but that takin' dough from that guy for them chairs was a crime that meant the rest of my life in the cooler. I'd have been thankful about then if the brawny Mrs. Elliot had come at me with a rollin' pin and gave me an excuse to beat it and call the rest of the sale off. But no. The Elliot's were over in the corner with their heads together, jabberin' away and pointin' at me but givin' no sign of any idea of bringin' the sale to an end by violence.

"Joe Conner," I think to myself, "this is once when you got too smart! You're sellin' stuff that you ain't got no right to sell. If the Elliots don't put you behind the bars for breakin' and enterin', grand larceny and obtainin' money by fraud, Flubb & Company will!"

I take a long breath.

"Folks," I address the crowd, "the next article offered for sale is a handsome arm-chair."

"Six dollars yelps one of my gang.

"Seven!" chorus three or four more.

"Eight!" comes a cry from several parts of the room.

"Nine!" barks the woman who'd bid on the other four chairs.

"Ten!" sings out a young feller in front of me.

"I'm dizzy.

"Ten dollars!" I murmur. "Ten dollars! Who'll bid twenty? Won't you, please, bid twenty?" I ask one of my gang.

"Twelve, offers the woman who'd spoke before.

I cuss the stupid bunch of lunkheads I'd brought with me.

"Well, I think, 'as long as it's goin' this way, I'd better get all the money I can! If these people insist on buttin' in on my private auction sale, they've got to pay for it!"

"Twelve dollars!" I sneer. "Only twelve dollars offered for this beautiful piece of architecture!"

"Thirteen!" bids a big guy in the corner.

Well, I finally kidded them up as high as nineteen bucks at which figger I was forced to knock the chair down to a young girl with red hair. Not that the red hair had anything to do with it, but I just happen to remember. I guess the chair was a bargain at that, but that didn't bother me. I was busy enough between wonderin' what the name was of the crime I was committin'.

Of all the stuff the Elliot's bought from Flubb & Company I managed to sell to my crew one pitcher, a kitchen table and a sofa with busted springs. The rest of the stuff was bid in by the neighbors, and, when I sold the last Flubb article—a parlor lamp—I had in my pockets some two hundred dollars that didn't belong there.

"Well, folks," I say when the lamp goes to a woman for four-eighty, "that's all. The sale's over. I thank you."

And then I start to get down from my chair.

But there comes a cry from the corner.

"Oh, Mister Sheriff! Young feller! Wait a second!"

It's Mrs. Elliot. She rushes over to me, grabs me by the arm.

"Listen. What 'll you take to auction off the rest of the stuff in the flat?"

"The rest of the stuff!" I gasp. "What—"

"Sure!" she grins. "I'd like to get rid of it—if I can get any prices like you got for that other stuff."

"Twenty per cent.," I tell her.

"Go to it!" she bids me.

I go. Inside of a half-hour the Elliots ain't got a bed to sleep in or a pot to cook

with, but they have got a hundred and sixteen bucks.

The followin' mornin' I'm at the store of Flubb & Company as soon as they're open for business.

"Mr. Flubb," I ask, "what would you say this account was worth?"

"Well," he says with a smile, "I'd say it wasn't worth anything. Why?"

"I've found these folks," I tell him. "I think maybe I could get you a hundred and fifty for a receipted bill."

"Get it!" he snaps. "Don't hesitate!"

"We get a commission—on the full amount?" I ask.

"Of course! Of course!" he says. "And I'll tell you confidentially, Conner, that we're making a good profit at that!"

"You'd be satisfied, then, with a hundred and ten?" I inquire.

"A hundred and ten?" he repeats. "Oh, yes, certainly, we would."

"Well, here it is," I tell him, countin' the money off from what I'd gathered at the auction.

"But, Conner," he says, "but—"

"But—nothin'!" I grin. "You've got what you said you'd be satisfied with."

"But there's somethin' wrong here," he insists. "Where did you get this money?"

I tell him.

"And," I finish, "if you don't think I earned what I have over—"

"Get out of here!" he laughs. "You're a highbinder! Get out—before I'm tempted to have you arrested! And, by the way," he calls after me as I leave his office, "any time you want to leave Giles—there's a job waiting for you here."

"Oh, I wouldn't leave Giles!" I grin. "I can cheat him easier than I can you!"

On the way to the street I see what looks like a familiar figger pokin' around among the furniture in the store. It's Mrs. Elliot. I duck behind a bookcase and hear enough of what she's sayin' to the salesman to let me know that, under the name of Mrs. Arabella O'Gara, she's investin' what I handed her the night before as the first deposit on a new set of housefurnishin's.

I guess it'll be up to me to pull off another auction sale before I'm many years older!

Pride of Tyson

by John Frederick

Author of "Crossroads," "Luck," etc.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

EDWARD GARTH, rough, and lacking in the social graces, yet avidly desirous of possessing them, had all but completed the huge dam that was to turn the Chiluah Valley from an arid desert into a smiling land of fruitfulness. And he had brought thither Henry Tyson, of the socially elect, who, according to the agreement drawn up between them at Tyson's own insistence, was to labor on the dam for six months, depending solely on the work of his hands for livelihood.

Garth's reason was that, as the iron to the magnet, Margaret Tyson, who adored her brother, would be drawn to the Chiluah in due course. For Garth loved her with all the strength of his strong and purposeful nature.

Tyson's reason harked back to a day in New York when Garth had worn him down in a friendly boxing bout; he promised himself revenge when the six months' labor would have put him in condition.

Now, however, on a pay-day, having spent seven of his twelve dollars for two ties, one of them a curious, snakelike affair, Tyson, after paying for his room at Mrs. Casey's—he did not take his meals there—found himself with but two dollars to last out the week. The odor of cooking rising at his window was almost intolerable. In a fit of rage he made to throw the thing out of the window, when his eye was caught by its sheen. The image of the snake had returned to him again, and, indeed, there was a touch of the sinister in the gaudy coloring of the bit of silk. And there was not much of the philosopher about Henry Tyson, but his imagination had wings.

CHAPTER IX.

HAM AND EGGS.

HE was up the next morning with the sun. There were no moments of miserable half sleep and half waking such as used to plague him in New York, but as soon as his eyes were open, he was out of bed with a leap, like a horse under the spur. And indeed there was an inner spur for Tyson.

Behind him lay a night of terrific dreams. He had been banqueting in his sleep, eating tremendously and drinking vastly, but suddenly realized that the food did not dull the edge of his appetite. Vast pasties, mountains of brown, crisp crust surmounting inner treasures of meat; sweetmeats; viands of three zones; all these had been stacked upon the board of his imaginings, and yet all of them could not appease his hunger.

A terrible sensation! Famine herself had lived in his bowels. The anguish of Tantalus was trebly his. And now that

he wakened, there was a poignant reminder that the dreams had not been altogether things of air, for a keen pain lay somewhere in his vitals.

Shaving and bathing were the briefest of ceremonies this morning—the Sabbath morning when the fortunate breakfasted late and heartily, but early though Tyson was, the cooks in the kitchen below were earlier still, and as he tied his necktie the aroma of frying ham drifted keenly to him. A sharp pain struck through the midriff of Tyson, and his brain spun dizzily.

Yet, as he started to rush from the room, his eye caught on the yellow-and-black necktie, still draped over the back of the chair, he caught it up, and ran on, chuckling. The necktie was an omen.

On the street below he checked his run to a walk, but such a walk as would have taxed the powers of a trained athlete to keep pace with. And everything about him, the sweet coolness of the morning air itself, whetted the razor-edge of his hunger.

This story began in *The Argosy* for July 3.

He had to go several blocks before he reached a restaurant, and the one which he eventually found was merely a hole in the wall, a lunch-counter; but through the window he beheld a man in white cap and apron frying ham and eggs and hot cakes on a broad slab of iron. It was the goodliest sight which had ever met the eye of Henry Tyson.

He snapped his fingers at the waiter as he swung onto a stool.

"Ham!" said Tyson, and then choked. "And eggs—" he continued hoarsely—"and hot-cakes. Stacks of 'em. Piles of 'em. And quick!"

The waiter stared at him, but he had seen hungry men before, and even while he stared a plate of bread and a pat of butter and knife and fork and spoon clattered upon the imitation-marble top of the counter. Butter—but that was a needless luxury; the teeth of Tyson were instantly in the bread.

The minute-hand of the clock stole on past one little black line after another; and not until it had made a complete revolution of the dial did Tyson push back on his stool with a sigh of success. Automatically he reached into a coat pocket, but his hand came out empty. His hungry eye darted at a glass case filled with cigars and cigarettes. And among the cigarettes the first box which met his glance was his favorite Egyptian brand. A moment later he was drawing down great breaths of smoke.

"How much?" he asked, and puffed a cloud toward the ceiling.

"Eighty and twenty," said the waiter. "One buck."

The hand of Tyson, already in his pocket, closed convulsively on his entire capital. One from two left one.

"What!" he cried.

"Twenty for the cigarettes," said the waiter, prepared to argue. "And ham and eggs—"

"Never mind," groaned Tyson, and shoved the large, round dollar across the counter.

On the street again, however, his spirits rose instantly. The spring air, dry and cool, at this hour, fanned his forehead; he

had eaten to repletion; the familiar thick, sweet smoke went deep into his lungs.

If there are three qualifications for mortal happiness, meat and tobacco are two of them. Tyson was happy. And in his mood of aimless content he wandered up the slope, past the dam, where cranes and derricks stood idle—for even a Garth could not work peons on Sunday—and up the valley of the Chihuah.

It was the first time he had gone up the stream for any distance, but now his careless mood led him on and on. Just above the dam the valley was sparsely wooded, but the trees thickened as he proceeded, mostly short-trunked and of species of which he knew nothing. Of course he knew the cottonwoods and the willows, particularly thick along the edges of the Chihuah, but the rest were new to him.

The leaves were a lighter and yellower-green than any foliage with which he had been familiar in the East. And throughout the forest, in every open space, there was the inevitable cactus of the Southwest, sometimes broad, heavy leaves, close to the ground, sometimes tall and slender stalks armed with terrific thorns that could defy beast and birds and keep the worthless dry pith safe in the stem. Sometimes he found tiny shrubs bearing pears covered with an armor thick with reddish spines.

Through such patches as these he had to pick his way with care, for he knew that the thorns were often of sufficient strength to pierce the stoutest shoe-leather, and they made deep, poisonous wounds, like the teeth of a beast of prey. He had seen the effect of them on the feet of the peons.

He went on very leisurely. His mind moved sluggishly, for all his spare energy was wrapped around the good things in his stomach, and he still thought of the tasty ham, and his nostrils pulled down the cigarette-smoke deeper and deeper.

In the same manner his eyes nibbled at the good things about him, and even in the burned basin of the Chihuah noted each variety—the changes in the outgrowths of rock, for instance. Sometimes they showed the red stains of copper-ore, and now and again he picked up a fragment of quartz glittering with sparks of yellow.

Perhaps those very rocks had been broken off by the hammer of some prospector who had wandered up the Chiluah equipped with a set of drills, a mucking-spoon, and a single jack, ready to read the secrets of the stones, and hunting always for gold. How many had gone up this same valley on the still hunt for treasure, but finding their happiness more in the pursuit than in the actual possession of the metal. He had heard tales of those hardy men following a brave to-morrow around the world.

Sometimes, he decided, he would take time off and learn the signs of the rocks. And he would know what the varying colors of the soil meant. At this point in his musings he stopped and listened to the lazy sound of the church-bells welling up from La Blanca, far, far behind him, and spreading in small waves, and breaking upon his ears with soft and irregular plashings. That sound died out and again the silence crept about him. He began to feel a mysterious sense of content—intimacy with nature.

CHAPTER X.

THE WHISTLER.

IT was, indeed, the most silent forest he had ever seen. He knew the hush of woodlands, but usually there are little sounds and noises which creep into one's consciousness by dim degrees. Once noted they continue—buzzing of insects, and bird-voices diminutive in the distance. None of this here. It was not until he had lighted his second cigarette and paused with the thought of turning back that the hush was broken.

It was a musical duet of two whistling birds, sometimes long, solitary, inviting whistles, sometimes quick, down-pattering bursts of twittering. Toward this sound, cautiously, for sometimes it seemed near and again far off, Tyson made his way. It was at one of the times when the whistling seemed furthest away—indeed, when he was about to give up the futile hunt—that he found a farther reason for turning back. A little creek, half a dozen paces in width, came murmuring across his path, sent from some spring in the hills above.

As he turned to leave, however, the whistling broke out again, near, loud, and, glancing up sharply, he saw one of the two birds perched in the top of a slender sapling—a top so slender that even the meager weight of the bird kept it swaying here and there, and it was necessary for the bird to steady itself with frequent spreadings and flurries of the wings.

Never had Tyson seen plumage more brilliant. He made out yellow legs and a blue body, with a breast of gold and crimson and green, and wings shouldered with scarlet and commingled yellows. These were the details of the colors, but as the songster balanced with flurrying wings on the sapling top, the sun shifted and blended and mixed the colors till sometimes it seemed a solid flash of gold, then a blur of blue, then a glow of scarlet and again a mixture of all those rich colors beyond words to describe.

The feathers of his tiny crest were now so ruffled that they stood up almost on end, and as Tyson watched, the bird started that sharp scolding, looking down at the ground.

Tyson followed that glance and his eyes fell on a girl seated on the further side of the creek. It startled him almost to fear, at first, for it seemed so inscrutable to him, and it struck on his fancy as if the girl were in fact the other bird turned to human flesh.

But obviously enough she was plain woman, and busy now with the most womanly of occupations. She had been washing her hair in the soft waters of the creek, apparently, and now she dried it in the sun—a black and silken mass so long that the hand with which she combed it could hardly reach to the ends.

She was a brown beauty. It was impossible to imagine a hat on that wild head, and the strong sun had tanned her deeply. Not her face and throat and agile hands alone; her dress was chiefly rags and tatters, a single garment, and where a thorn had rent it at the shoulder the skin looked out as dark as the hands or face. He might have thought her an Indian girl, but there was too generous a width between the eyes, the forehead was too broad and low, and, above

all, there was a singular and speaking delicacy of the features, particularly of curves about the mouth.

Yet, in spite of eyes and mouth and hair she was not beautiful. She had not sufficient repose for real beauty. There was about her an unrest, the alertness of the wild. It danced in her eyes as visibly as the sparkling of the sun on the waters; it showed in the lightning, graceful movement of wrist and hand; and as she sat there, at ease, one felt that in the instant she could be on her feet and lost in the forest. Lost at a whirlwind speed that it would be folly to pursue.

Yet, the most perfect and Grecian repose and regularity of feature could not have given her a greater charm than this piquancy, this uncertainty, this aloofness. She was like a perfume thrown on the wind and blown into one's very soul. The eye of Tyson—a sharp, hungry eye—went from the brilliant bird to the girl beside the water and back again.

Suddenly, as the scolding of the blue beauty from the sappling reached a moment's pause, she tilted back her head, pursed her mouth, and whistled. It was an imitation so exact, so perfectly modulated, that Tyson held his breath to listen. The long strain, so light and sharp, broke, wavered, began again, rose, fell—the wild bird which calls for its mate, the weirdness of the pipe, the sharpness of the flute, the complaint of the violin, all gathered into the thin, sweet note.

The scene was blotted out for Tyson. He stood instantly in an English garden at full night with the violets and the early roses breathing about him in the dark, and the shimmer of the lilies very faint by the pond, and the hedge gleaming under the moon, when the nightingale began its song.

The whistling ended; he was flung across six thousand miles of sea and land to the sunny valley of the Chihuah. He looked up to the bird on the sapling. It sat quite still, with its head cocked a little to one side as if it still listened—laughably like a connoisseur of music. Then the gleaming feathers of his throat swelled and bristled. He tucked back his crested head and began his long reply.

Her imitation had seemed perfect until the thin, pure reply of the bird began, and Tyson saw her frown with swift anger as the long, sweet note drew out. Before that first note died away, the slender hand of the girl darted out as swiftly as the head of a striking snake, and the next instant a stone struck the sapling under the very feet of the songster.

The bird was away, his scolding floating back behind him; and the girl stood up, shaking her fist after him, and stamping in a fury of angry disappointment. Her eyes were still blazing, her mouth still sulky, when she turned again and faced Tyson. She did not spring back from him, but she started, and remained there poised—the wind moved her hair aside, fluttered her dress—in a picture she would have seemed to be running already.

But the alarm passed as the reflection of a cloud whips across the surface of a narrow pool. She cast another angry glance in the direction of the bird.

"It was the wind that made me miss," she said. "It moved the tree."

"No," said Tyson, "your aim was too low."

Her anger rose like flame blown leaping by a touch of wind; instantly she was aglow.

She cried: "It was *not* too low! The wind—"

"I saw the stone strike," said Tyson. "It landed below the feet of the bird."

"No, no, no!" she stormed. "It did *not*!"

It thrilled him oddly to feel her opposition. Seeing her so angrily defiant, he was more sharply aware of her youth—the lines so slender at once, and so rounded. There is something in that age between girlhood and womanhood which carries home to the heart like music. He could not keep back the smile.

She leaned and stood erect again with a swiftness no eye could follow. In her hand she held another stone, and this one of formidable proportions.

"If you mock me—" she threatened.

"Well?" asked Tyson.

"I never miss *twice*," said the girl.

He regarded the stone about which her

fingers were tightening. The edges of it were uncomfortably jagged. But for some reason Tyson knew at once that he would have to come closer to the girl. He swept the stream with a glance.

A little above him the course of the water—which was everywhere comparatively shallow—was broken by stones which projected well above the surface. They were a risky distance apart, but a crossing might be managed.

"I'm coming over for a chat," said Tyson, and moved over opposite the stones.

"You'll stay where you are," responded the girl confidently.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"What makes you so sure?"

"This."

She tossed up the stone and caught it again, deftly.

"You think I'm afraid of that?"

"All men are cowards," she announced with conviction.

She stood now with her arms akimbo and surveyed him with an insolently measuring glance.

"Who told you that?" he asked.

"Padre Miguel," she answered.

"He is a fool!" said Tyson.

"A fool!" she echoed, more in wonder than in anger. And then, shrugging her shoulders: "But you know he cannot hear you."

"I suppose it would be dangerous if he did?"

"Look at that branch."

She raised her arm, the ragged sleeve fell back to the shoulder.

"Well?"

"He would wither you like that—with a word!"

"Ah!" murmured Tyson, smiling once more.

"Are you mocking me again?"

"No, I'm mocking Padre Miguel."

"Do you know what comes to men who mock the padre?"

"Tell me."

"They are kept another hundred years in purgatory, and red fire is poured down their throats every day."

She made a grimace.

"Get your stone ready," said Tyson, "for I'm coming."

And instantly he was on the way.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WISDOM OF THE PADRE.

IT was not altogether a simple task, for the stones were wet, and the least misjudgment of distance would send Tyson and his single suit of clothes headlong into the water and rolling along in the sharp current; but each spring he made was true to the fraction of an inch. Once, indeed, he slipped and staggered, but recovered himself with the address of a bird fluttered by an unexpected gust of wind. A second later he was safely upon the farther bank, and looked up to her.

She had retreated as swiftly as he came, and now she stood at the edge of the little clearing, her stone poised strongly above her shoulder, and her eyes afire with a stern light.

"If all *men* are the cowards," laughed Tyson, panting, "why are you *afraid*?"

"Afraid?" she echoed. "I'm never afraid."

"Then why do you run away?"

"Why do you dodge a snake?" she countered.

"Ah, then men are snakes! The good Padre Miguel has told you this, as well?"

"Yes."

"But how the deuce am I to talk with you if you stand over there with that infernal stone leveled at my head all the time?" he asked, with a touch of irritation.

"I have not asked you to talk to me," she said.

"And I suppose that's the very reason I want to."

Perhaps it was the heat of the sun, which was gradually increasing, or it may have been the continual threat of the poised stone. At any rate, Tyson dropped his hand into a pocket to bring out a handkerchief and wipe his forehead, but what the hand brought forth was the ominous yellow-and-black necktie. It dangled at full length from his fingers, flashing and twisting like a live thing in the sun.

"Oh!" cried the girl.

Her face was alight with a smile of eagerness. The stone dropped unheeded to the ground. She made a step toward him. Tyson grew strangely thoughtful. He considered the shining face of this stranger, the five dollars he had spent on this necktie, the single dollar remaining to his pocket, the six long days which would intervene before Saturday's pay.

"Do you like it?" And he flashed the silk in the sun.

"Oh!" she murmured again. Then, with the directness of a child: "Give it to me!"

He followed his first impulse and extended it toward her; he followed a second thought and closed his fingers over it. And at the same instant she snatched at it. They stood facing each other, each clutching an end of the tie. The girl was panting with excitement; it seemed to Tyson that her eyes alternately widened and expanded; she was like a hunted animal brought to bay. And he could not tell whether in the next minute she would turn and race off among the trees—or spring at his throat. It sent a tingling up his spine.

"I'll sell it to you," said Tyson.

She frowned.

"Not for a money price. But some things you can tell me."

"What things?"

"Why, your name, for instance."

"Rona Armitage Carnahan."

She jerked the necktie from his fingers and leaped away, but at the edge of the clearing, glancing back and seeing that he did not follow, she came to an abrupt halt and faced him again. The yellow-black of the silk was pressed to her breast.

Tyson sat down at the edge of the stream, cross-legged, his back to a broad stone. He began to whistle. It was all the inspiration of a moment, but it worked perfectly, for in a moment he knew from the corner of his eye that she was stealing back toward him with gliding noiseless steps. His whistling was almost destroyed by the thought of this girl stalking him.

Her shadow fell over him. She was sitting upon the top of a near-by stone, frowning curiously down on him, the necktie still clasped in both hands.

"Why did you give me this?" she asked. "I didn't give it. You took it, you know."

"Oh!" she cried softly. "Then I suppose I should give it back?"

Before he could speak she went on: "But I don't think I will."

"Padre Miguel will be very angry when you tell him," suggested Tyson gravely.

"Oh, he is always angry when I speak of a man, even of the Big Man."

"I knew," growled Tyson, "that there was a Big Man in it somewhere."

"But," she pursued thoughtfully. "I think you would have given it to me, anyway, in another minute. Wouldn't you?"

"I suppose I would," admitted Tyson.

"Why?"

"For the same reason I crossed the creek, I think."

She was silent a moment, her chin resting on her clenched fist, studying him.

"That's odd," she pronounced at last. "But you're different from the rest, aren't you?"

"Not quite so snaky?" he suggested.

"Not quite," she said grudgingly.

It came to him that she spoke amazingly pure English, this waif of the Chiltuah. He turned a bit, so as to face her more squarely, and he took off his hat. At that she gave a delighted cry and clapped her hands together.

"What is it?" he asked.

"May I touch your head?"

"Why the deuce do you want to do that?"

"I'll do it ever so gently."

"Fire away, then!"

Her hand stole out, cautiously; her lips were parted in awe and delight. So she touched his hair and then snatched back her hand and studied the tips of her fingers.

"It isn't paint," she said, frankly amazed, and then looked down to him with a new wonder: "What makes your hair so—yellow?"

"It just happens that way."

She frowned, like one who will not be put off with a light answer.

"Padre Miguel will tell me then." She edged closer to him on the rock, smiling.

"You're funny, aren't you?" she suggested.

"What's your name?"

"Henry Tyson."

She repeated: "Henry Tyson. That's different, too. What do you do?"

"I work on the dam."

She smiled incredulously.

"Don't you think I'm telling you the truth?"

"All men lie to women," said this child of the wilderness.

"The devil they do! Padre Miguel told you that also?"

"Of course."

"But why shouldn't I work on the dam?"

"You aren't the kind who work."

"Where do you see the signs?"

"Men who work have dull faces. They are like the faces of starved steers when there is no grass on the range in winter. But you, *señor*, have a little bright devil in each eye. But do not be afraid. I shall not tell the Padre Miguel! Oh, by no means!"

"Thank you," said Tyson. "It would anger him to know, of course."

"Oh, yes. He would drive the two little devils away."

"Naturally," assented Tyson dryly.

"But—shall I tell you a great secret?"

"Well?"

"I like those same points of fire—rather. They are like eyes within eyes. Also, I will tell you another thing. Shall I?"

"By all means."

"When I raised the rock I was really hoping all the time that you would come across the stream, *Señor Tyson*."

"By jove!" murmured Tyson. "What a bully, frank sort you are! But, by the way, what are you going to do with that?"

"See!" she answered and, gathering back her hair, she passed the bright band of the necktie around her head and tied it behind. It changed her amazingly; it made her instantly a wild Indian, untamed and untameable. She leaned above the water, and Tyson, glancing down, saw the image smiling up to her.

"I like it," she said, facing him again. "Don't you?"

"I'm glad I gave it to you," he said.

"Ah," she sighed, "that makes it perfect. If you are glad, then I shall not have to tell Padre Miguel."

"What would he do if he knew that you had—taken it?"

"He would only talk. But, ah, how the good padre talks! His words are little things, but they work into the flesh like thorns until they pierce the heart. Sometimes after he has talked to me I've lain awake all night and cried."

"I'd like to see this padre."

"The padre would not like you. He would send you away forever, and I should be sorry. The hair of other men is not like gold, you see. And yet—"

She stopped, watching him with caution and curiosity.

"Why do you smile at me like that, *Señor Tyson*?"

"For the same reason that brought me across the creek."

"Will you tell me?"

"Because you're so beautiful, Rona."

She sprang up, quick as fear, her finger at her lip, her eyes darting about like a hunted thing toward every covert of trees and rocks.

"If you had been heard!" she cried softly.

"What's wrong, in the name of heaven?"

"You must never again—never—call me beautiful! The padre knows everything—he is everywhere! If he heard you say that to me he—he would make you lose your way in the desert—he would make you wander for days and days without water!"

"Because I called you—"

But she sprang to him in terror and closed his mouth with her hand. He felt the quiver of her fingers; he saw her head turned, and the frightened glances once more seeking an eavesdropper.

"I saved you!" she panted, standing straight again.

"But tell me what's wrong in saying—that—to you?"

"How should I know what is wrong in it? But the padre has told me—oh, so many times and in so many terrible ways—that men who call me beautiful have devils in them. How can I know why?"

"I think I might like the padre, Rona."

"And yet," she said, and she leaned close, whispering: "I am *so* glad that I heard you say it."

She sat on her rock again and asked him seriously: "Am I very wicked?"

"You're delightful," said Tyson. "Is that permitted?"

"I suppose so," she said cautiously.

"But I sha'n't ask the padre."

"No?"

"No, because something tells me he would say it is very wrong. I myself, *señor*, feel that it is wrong!"

"Explain yourself, Rona."

"Have you ever taken fire upon the end of two sticks, and played with it?"

"Never."

"It is great fun. You can dance with the fire, and in the night it is lovely to watch against the sky. But then the flame may drop down the sticks, very suddenly, and set your clothes all on fire. It is dangerous, you see. And talking with you, Señor Tyson, is like dancing with the fire."

She sat suddenly, stiffly erect.

"Hush!" she said, her lips framing the caution soundlessly. "Some one is watching us! I feel it!"

And Tyson, turning, saw a sight that made his blood run cold. For on the edge of the forest, leaning against a tree, was the strangest figure of a man he had ever seen. It was an old face, and yet it was framed in jet black hair—long, wild hair. His skin was sickly pale. His eyes were so bright a brown that they seemed red, and the man was laughing silently, like the grin of a wolf-hound.

Tyson turned his head slowly back to the girl. She was already on her feet.

"He has come for me," she said.

"Good-by, Señor Tyson!"

And when Tyson rose he no longer saw the ghastly, laughing face beside the tree, but toward this place Rona walked and disappeared instantly among the foliage.

"Is that Padre Miguel?" muttered Tyson to himself, or is it the Big Man?"

He kicked another stone out of his way, viciously, and then turned and looked back through the trees. Far away a bird began whistling.

"The devil take the girl," muttered Henry Tyson.

CHAPTER XII.

TEQUILA?

NOW that time meant so much to him, Garth lived under a tremendous strain, rising with the first light of day, and laboring incessantly until midnight and later. Sometimes for twenty-four hours at a stretch he did not close his eyes; many a day his only rest was an hour flat upon the floor with his arms thrown wide, crosswise. He had a vast reserve of muscular and nervous energy, and he drew upon it remorselessly to meet the crisis.

For without him work on the dam went helter-skelter. There was no assistant, no second to whom he could entrust the management for even a moment. Now a few days at top speed and a little luck in the delaying of the spring floods, and all would be well.

He multiplied himself, and the commonest laborer felt the eye and the inspiration of the big boss.

The casual observer could have noticed little difference in the roughly hewn face of Garth: he was a little thinner, that was all. But to the careful eyes, there was a long story in the bulge of the muscles at the base of the jaw, the hollowing of the cheek, the sinking and brightening of the eye: and the most careless of those who saw him daily noted a nervous habit growing upon him—a restless flexing and reflexing of his right hand that continued without ceasing, day and night, as if he were taking up the uncompleted labors of others who had failed.

Living in this atmosphere of endless strain, no success made him smile, no failure made him scowl. He kept an even front to all occasions.

So, on this Thursday afternoon, when Garth stopped with an exclamation and a scowl, the young engineer who was going the round of the works with the big boss looked upon him with astonishment and concern. The smashing of the fifty-ton crane the day before had not brought such

an outburst from Ed Garth. He swept all things around him with a startled eye, but all seemed to be running without interruption or flaw; perhaps some singular intuition had brought news of disaster to the builder.

"What is it?" asked the engineer at last.

"Don't you hear, Harris?" cried the big man in one of his rare bursts of impatience. -

The terrific clangor of steel on steel, stone on stone, the voices of engines and men—surely it was an uproar worthy of the heart of hell, but nothing which seemed out of place at the dam.

"Not a thing that's wrong."

"The singing, man!" cried Garth. "Damn it, don't you hear that singing?"

From the side of La Cabeza, at the base of the dam, it rose—a Mexican air which Harris did not know.

"Why," he said, "the Mex often sing while they're working, don't they? Thought it was a good sign?"

"They sing when they work—sometimes," growled Garth; "but they don't sing in the cement storehouse! And by God, that's where they're singing now!"

Beyond doubt that was the source of the music, now that Harris bent his ear to listen in that direction. He called up a picture of the storehouse—the sweltering heat which seemed magnified to oven intensity by the roof of corrugated iron—the wraiths of white cement dust that bite the skin and eat at the lungs.

It was surely impossible to conceive cheerful singing from such a place. To the cement house the unruly spirits were consigned—the most powerful and dangerous Yaquis, for instance—and ten days of that labor brought them forth limp of body and docile of spirit.

"It isn't possible!" cried Harris. "The devil himself couldn't sing in that place!"

"Tequila!" said Garth.

His nervous right hand balled itself into a mighty fist; the buffet of those broad, bony knuckles might have crushed plate-armor.

"There's been more smuggling of the stuff," he went on, "and if I catch the men that have done it I'll make them an ex-

ample that 'll cry to Heaven!" He concluded after an instant of gloomy silence: "Tequila!" and strode off toward the cement house with young Harris fairly running to keep up with the longer legs of his chief.

For if rum has been called "demon" among the whites, tequila deserves the title of "Satan" among the Mexicans. It is the super-devil among drinks. It is distilled from that species of the maguey called zotol, which grows extensively in the state of Jalisco near the town of Tequila, hence its name.

It is like clear water in appearance; it has the power of liquid dynamite. With its peculiar and pungent odor and "green" taste, few white men like it. Even the native Mexican is apt to disguise its flavor.

First he sprinkles salt on his wrist, and prepares a slice of lemon. Then he tastes the salt, drinks the tequila, and sucks the lemon in rapid alternation without drawing breath between. Imbibed in this manner, the stuff is not unpleasant, and the peon loves it with a consuming passion.

A wine-glass full will stagger the uninitiated, but the natives drink it copiously with little noticeable effect. Yet the effects of the intoxication last for many hours, and produce in the end a murderous and brooding depression. Mexicans drunk on tequila are like starved wolves; they turn their teeth on each other.

Several times cargoes of this liquid poison had been brought surreptitiously to the workers on the dam. One shipment resulted in a widespread strike. A second brought about a deadly knife-fight that laid up twenty men in the hospital. So the word "tequila" had deep meaning for Garth. It had equal meaning for young Harris, and knowing the bare-handed methods of his chief, he blanched, and made sure that his revolver was loaded and ready for instant use.

In this manner they hurried to the cement-house, and climbed up to the broad, dirty platform. At the same time the plaintive strains of La Paloma rose from the depths of the building. It was a moment before they could take in the details of the situation.

On the platform on the further side of the warehouse thousands of sacks of cement had recently been dumped, and these were being carted with hand-trucks from the outside pile to the interior of the building. The white dust filled the place like a thick fog, and turned the laborers into ghostly figures, powdered from head to foot.

The endless chain of trucks turned steadily between the pile and the neat stacks of sacks inside; they could make out that in the weighted inward journey the men were silent—the breath jolted from their lungs, but as they turned back each man struck into the song of the moment. Garth regarded the scene with a somber eye.

"What does it mean?" asked Harris, white of face.

"Mutiny inside of twenty-four hours," responded Garth curtly. "These brown devils are never happy except when they're planning mischief. Go find Rodriguez and ask him what he means by letting this run on unreported? No, I'll go with you!"

Rodriguez, a redoubtable half-breed famous for his grim temper and his skill with the knife, they found perched on a stack of empty sacks, his black hair powdered white with dust, his dark face similarly discolored, and raised in a minstrel ecstasy while he boomed out the strains of La Paloma—"The Dove!" Across his knees he held a banjo with two strings missing, and kept some sort of accompaniment upon this instrument. The large hand of Garth fell upon the dusty shoulder of his overseer.

But to the astonishment of the big boss, Rodriguez turned his ugly face, still singing, and still singing he slowly swung himself down from the stack of sacks. It was not till that round of the song ended that he permitted himself to speak, or to be spoken to.

"What does it mean?" asked Garth, too astonished to show his anger at once. "Tequila? And you, too, Rodriguez?"

But the eye of Rodriguez was not dulled by the familiar, deadly film of tequila. He stared blankly on his chief.

"All this damned singing," went on Garth, with rising wrath, and his voice

thundered over the wailing song. "What does it mean, Rodriguez? Are you all drunk? Is it tequila again?"

"Tequila?" laughed Rodriguez, shaking his head. "Ah, no, *señor*. It is El Oro!"

"The golden one?" growled Garth. "What the devil does he mean by that, Harris?" Then he turned again and bent a grim eye upon Rodriguez to make sure that there was no mockery in the man. The Mexican, be it known, loves a jest, but he is only too apt to point his jokes with a knife.

"Are you angry, Señor Garth?" said Rodriguez anxiously. "Is the singing bad? See!" And he gestured toward the line of truckmen. "Is it ever before known that they worked so fast?"

The laborers, indeed, were swinging along at a rapid pace.

"Too fast," rumbled Garth. "Too damned fast. Looks like tequila. And if it is—you'll sweat for it, Rodriguez."

"Tequila?" The eloquent shoulders of Rodriguez went up. "Liars have brought tales of me to the Señor Garth. No, it is not tequila. It is El Oro."

He pointed to a figure that passed singing, in a wraith of cement dust, trundling his hand-truck along.

CHAPTER XIII.

EL ORO.

"EL ORO!" announced the foreman to Garth.

"El Oro—the Golden One," translated Garth for the benefit of Harris, and he stepped forward with the younger man at his side.

The name El Oro evidently came from the color of the man's hair, for even through the cement dust it showed a bright yellow, shining where an occasional ray of sun slid between a crack in the roof of galvanized iron, and splashed upon the workers here and there. It was Henry Tyson, and Garth cursed once, briefly, and with profound emotion.

Tyson had an appearance of wild gaiety, viewed from a distance, with his head tilting back as he sang, but as he came oppo-

sift them on his loaded return journey toward the stacks of cement within, there was a pause in the music, and the face of Tyson set.

Garth saw that his face was pinched, the eyes buried in shadow, the nostrils distended to catch deeper breaths of that acidly dusty air; and the lips drew in a thin, straight line. The moment before he seemed drunkenly happy. Now he was utterly sobered, and seemed supported on his feet only by a great resolution. One moment he swaggered with the insolent gait of the self-contented; but as he retreated he seemed staggering, about to fall.

One thing Garth had noted above all. The clothes of Henry Tyson, once the pride of a Fifth Avenue tailor, were ruined beyond repair. If his pride lay at all in personal smartness, then surely that pride must have fallen utterly. His shirt, worn to tatters below the elbows by the friction of the rough sacks against the cloth, his trousers, his shoes, were layered thick with dust, and through the dust had worked his perspiration, gluing cement and cloth into a sort of brittle concrete. He was not even white. He was a grisly gray.

"Drunk as a lord," chuckled Harris.

"Drunk?" repeated Garth thoughtfully. "No, undernourished, I'd say." And he muttered to himself: "The pride of the devil, but why in the name of Heaven is he doing this?"

He broke off and turned back to Rodriguez.

From him he heard a strange tale. On Monday of this week, El Oro had come asking that he be given a place in the cement gang. It was surprising, for no white man had hitherto been consigned to that bitter labor. Rodriguez had asked questions, but El Oro had insisted that he wanted the job. He even seemed eager for it.

What was there to be done? The new man did his full share of the work, and if there were any particularly obnoxious jobs, El Oro gladly did it. Rodriguez had watched El Oro. He had seen the gringo laugh at his work. There were even tales going about. Some said that the hand of God was manifestly upon the man with the golden hair.

The rest of the gang had agreed from the first that it was a miracle that a white man should ask for such bitter labor, and they were almost afraid to work beside him. Nevertheless the days went on, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and nothing had happened.

It had seemed to Rodriguez, indeed, that El Oro was a very docile madman. But on the morning of this very day—the fourth—El Oro had suddenly staggered while he was wheeling his truck along, and fallen upon the floor. When they reached him, he lay like dead, but in a moment he was again upon his feet, brushed them aside, and went on again like mad with his truckload. Aye, he even burst into song.

The rest of the gang was then sorely stricken with fear. That one should sing in the cement house was like music in hell. But there was something infectious about the singing. Another caught up the tune. Then another. Before long the whole gang was in an uproar.

The work proceeded merrily. Men worked as if they loved their labor here in this white-misted, sweltering inferno. However, Rodriguez implored Garth to let El Oro stay. Let others say what they would, he, Rodriguez, and all his crew, were glad to have this merry wild man with them.

Garth remained for another moment, watching the far-off figure of Tyson, and bit his lip. He felt almost as if the credulous Mexicans were right. The hand of God was upon Tyson, and had maddened him. Why else should the foolish fellow choose this man-killing labor?

He waited until Tyson once more passed them, trundling along his hand-truck, and singing again with such force that his gait became a swagger. Or was it weakness that made him unsteady.

Garth frowned more gloomily. If Margaret Tyson found her brother in this condition—always supposing that she really came out to the dam—would she not turn her blame upon Garth himself? He stepped out and laid a hand on the dusty shoulder of Henry Tyson.

It could not have been the weight of the hand alone. It must have been more the surprise at being stopped in this uncer-

monious fashion. But Tyson reeled back a step as he came to a halt. He stared at Garth with wide, unseeing eyes, as if he were frightened.

"What's this mean, Tyson?" asked the big man curtly.

"Don't you see?" and Tyson smiled wan through the dust on his face, while the sweat from his forehead slowly furrowed the gray. "Work! Work, man! And I'm doing as much as the next man. Ask the boss, over there. Ask Rodriguez."

"As much as the next, and a little more, Tyson," growled Garth. "Let me be alone with him, will you, Harris?"

Harris obediently turned away. He was glad enough to get over to the side door and draw down deep breaths of the fresh air and brush the fine gray silt from his clothes. He was not a particularly soft-handed man, but the depths of the foulest mine were nothing compared with this inferno of sharp-scented dust and heat pouring down from the iron roof. It was so hot, indeed, that it dried perspiration almost as soon as it started, and left the skin dry and salty.

"Too much work, Tyson," continued Garth, as soon as they were alone. "You look as if you need the doctor's attention now."

"Nonsense," said Tyson calmly, and looked the other in the eye. "I'm perfectly all right."

"Enjoying yourself, eh?" suggested Garth grimly.

"I'm carrying my end of the load—the hardest load I can find at the dam. Yes, I'm enjoying it!"

"Why the devil do you wobble on your feet, then? Come over here and sit down, man; you look positively ghastly."

"It's the dust on my face," said Tyson coolly. "Also, if I knock off work I'll have my wages docked and maybe get fired. If I'm fired that means I've broken my contract."

"Damn the contract," burst out Garth. His glance sharpened.

"Tyson, when did you last eat?"

"Eh?" The other looked about him vaguely. "Why, at noon."

"What did you have?"

"Er—sandwiches. Cold ham sandwiches and hot coffee at the restaurant over there, with Mex soup to start on and half a pie to wind up."

He lied smoothly, smiling upon Garth.

"But why do you ask?"

"Because you look half starved."

"Merely getting down to weight. Always get lean."

"Tyson, you're lying like a villain. Confound it, man, you'll do yourself a permanent harm if you aren't careful!"

"Listen to me," said Tyson gravely. "If I can't prove that I can do a man's work with my hands, I'll never be able to look at myself in a mirror after this. If I have to admit that I'm a soft-muscle parlor athlete with a yellow heart, I'll hate myself the rest of my days. Why, Garth, if you were in my place you know you'd go through with the game in spite of hell!"

Big Ed Garth looked at Tyson thoughtfully. There was more metal in the man than he had dreamed. This was sufficiently foolish, but there was something fine at the bottom of it.

"As a matter of fact," admitted Tyson, "what keeps me going is the thought that you'd never buckle on a job like this."

There it was again. The fellow had set up Garth as a sort of model—almost an ideal. For the second time a great desire welled up in Garth to make a clean breast of the whole affair—to tell Tyson, man to man, the underlying purpose for which he had been lured out to the Chiluah—to admit that he was serving no more important purpose than bait in a trap, as far as Garth was concerned.

And then Tyson was saying: "I've been writing to Margaret and telling her that I've taken everything that comes my way. Do you think I could face her if she came out here and found that I'd just quit? Eh?"

Garth moistened his dry lips.

"She's coming?" he asked sharply.

"I don't know. Her last letter sounded a good deal as if she'd take the next train. She's lonely."

For another moment Garth paused and fought temptation.

Then: "Take care of yourself," he said, and abruptly turned on his heel.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT HUNGER.

IT was the crossing of the Rubicon for Garth. Grant that it was a small deception which he had practised upon Tyson in the beginning; the enthusiasm of the latter had made it a thing of moment. He had more than met Garth half-way. He was playing his game fair and square and hard. And Garth winced at the thought.

He tried to console himself. After all, what could he tell Tyson? That he was in love with his sister? He had only seen her once, and Tyson would think him mad. Better let the whole matter ride, and if Tyson ever found out—well, he would risk the consequences.

He paused at the door, and spoke to Rodriguez on the way out.

"That fellow back there—El Oro, you call him," he said. "Don't let him work himself to death. I'm interested in him."

And Rodriguez replied with a flash of teeth.

Now the whistle shrieked, soon after, the end of that day, and while the rest of the day shift hurried off from the cement house, Tyson sank on the heap of empty sacks beside the boss, Rodriguez.

He remained there beside the half-breed partly because he wished to talk to Rodriguez, more largely because his aching legs for the moment refused to carry him farther.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday had seen Tyson eating a single meal of bread and milk, but vegetarians to the contrary, there is no doubt that working man is a carnivorous animal; and while Tyson was not actually famished, he was sadly weakened—visions of a barbecue he had once attended haunted him.

Even that meager diet had consumed his money. There remained to him at the end of Wednesday a single twenty-five cent piece, and this he reserved until Friday. Thursday was his day of famine. Friday

he ate bread and milk—a drop of water on the desert. Now this was the last day. Before noon of Saturday he would have his week's pay—incredible wealth! And the crisis would be passed.

To the test Tyson brought, to be sure, a strong and well-trained body, and nerves of steel; but there is a vital difference between the most strenuous athletic activity and the spiritless and monotonous drain of manual labor. He who has not had to swing a pick or wield a sledge-hammer for eight or ten hours a day cannot understand the bitterness of the curse by which Adam was compelled to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

The air in the cement house was in itself a sufficient trial. The skin of his fingers, softened by sweat and filed away by the rough sacking, was soon worn to the flesh. It was painful to grip the sacks, and once gripped, being loosely filled, they evaded one's strength.

It was like attempting to lift the body of a man who lies limp. And on the journey across the rough boards of the flooring, the heavy hand-truck jerked and twisted and tugged at his arms and jolted him light-headed and settled a peculiar nausea in the pit of his stomach.

Yet he managed to fight his way through the days, calling more and more heavily on his reserve strength of nerve and muscle. And so he came to the last grim day of famine.

Now, there is nothing appalling in the thought of a two days' fast; men have been known to live for forty days, partaking of nothing but water. But there is a vast difference between idle fasting and working fasting. Any automobile will coast down hill, but it takes a good engine to tug up a grade.

Tyson was pulling up a grade, and a stiff one. The loss of a single meal means a good deal to a laborer. It makes his knees buckle and puts a mist before his eyes. The loss of two meals in a single day is enough to lay out the most powerful.

It is no wonder that Tyson, after five days of agony, and one of them a day of no nourishment, felt his head sing, and began to see visions. Two things sustained

him. One was pride; the other was the thought of Garth, upon which he fed as if on meat and wine.

But on this day even pride could not quite sustain him. He had fainted utterly away, as Rodriguez related to Garth.

After that a frenzy took him. He had lasted through all the torment. Was he to fail here at the very end? He fell back on the expedient of exhausted soldiers on a forced march; he began to sing, and the rhythm of the music enabled him to drag through the day.

A bitter day. At noon came the pay, but there was no time for Tyson to eat. Hardly had he received the money when the whistle blew one o'clock, and he had to go back to his last afternoon of effort.

He had expected that the afternoon would be harder than the morning, but it was not. The point was, that his health had not been seriously weakened by the trial. He was lean. His stomach lay flat against his back-bone. But it was the leanness of the hound. His heart and his lungs were sound. He did not dream it, but in case of need he could have done thrice as much. In fact, the fear of failure was more terrible to him than the actual hunger. The horrible fear of standing before Garth and admitting that he was beaten!

But the hours went more swiftly that afternoon. And at last the merciful whistle blew for the end of the day shift. It was like dew on the desert to Tyson!

Outside the warehouse he paused at the hydrant and stripped himself to the waist and bathed. Then he went down the slope toward La Blanca. On the way he kept his head high, and the money for the week's work clutched in his hand—he dared not appear weak before these peons who glanced aside at him, murmuring: "El Oro!"

And so he reached the restaurant. All he remembered of it afterward was that there was a gust of warmth as he entered through the swinging doors. And in the breath of warmth there was a mingling of a thousand odors of food.

Food! He did not see the faces of the eaters around him. The table was a white

smear before his eyes. All he knew was that food appeared on that smear, and he ate, ate, ate. His club brothers of Manhattan would have shuddered to watch his manners; but Tyson had lapsed a few thousand years and become merely a healthy, hungry animal, feeding heavily after the fasting.

After that he sat and smoked until his head cleared, his pulse grew more even. And not until that instant did the knowledge surge warm and sweet through his veins: he had won. He had played the part of the commonest laborer, and he was victorious!

When he left the restaurant and stepped onto the street he was singing softly to himself, and walking in a happy haze, when he saw a thing that threw a sharp heat into him—like three fingers of whisky in an empty stomach.

For straight before him, a matter of a few paces away, came Rona Carnahan and a tall man whom he knew as Kennedy—Kennedy, who ran the largest gambling-house in La Blanca, and who was, furthermore, the star-boarder at Mrs. Irene Casey's.

It flashed upon the mind of Tyson that this might be the "big man" of whom Rona had spoken, for at this very moment Kennedy was taking a package from the hands of Rona and tucking it under his arm with an air of unmistakable proprietorship.

CHAPTER XV.

DAINGEROUS LAUGHTER.

YET this was not what whipped the strength of anger through Tyson. It was the necktie of Kennedy—a very loud effect of yellow spots on a black background, like the back of a gaudy snake!

He stopped, glaring at them, but they walked heedlessly by. How should they take note of a common laborer covered with cement dust? Unreasoning, childish fury took Tyson by the throat. His necktie on the gambler!

A saving touch of the ridiculous suddenly cleared his mind with a gust of

laughter. His eyes were still dancing as he hailed an urchin strolling past.

"Here, you!" he called. "You see that man and that girl down the street?"

"*Sí, señor.*"

"Run after them. Take the man by the arm, yell at him that there's a riot in his house. Understand? Here, take this quarter," and Tyson's money slipped into the grimy brown paw. "Hurry!"

"*Sí, sí,*" stammered the boy, his eyes large with the vision of the silver coin, and he repeated: "Señor Kennedy, a riot in your house! Much noise! Guns!"

"Fine!" grinned Tyson. "Now run for it!"

The urchin was off down the street as if winged by the wind, and Tyson saw his messenger catch Kennedy by the arm and shout something, gesturing wildly behind him. As for the gambler, he paused only long enough to thrust the package back into the hands of Rona Carnahan, and then turned and swung down the street with long strides. He passed Tyson with eyes grimly alight and lips compressed, and his right hand now and again touched at his hip pocket.

"A gambler," mused Tyson, "and a fighting man!"

He watched him out of sight around the corner, and then hurried after the girl. It was not easy to overtake her, for she walked with a light, swift stride, longer than a woman's, and quicker than a man's. As for Tyson, in the excitement of the moment he was keen as a hound on a trail; in another moment he was at the side of the girl.

She cast an inquisitive glance up at him, and he regretted with a tremendous falling of the heart that he had purchased this interview at the price of his last meal. For the beauty which had been hers in the wilderness was gone in the street of the town. A certain piquancy, and the largeness of the eyes, was that all?

Knowledge dawned in her face; she smiled up at him.

"Señor Tyson!"

Assuredly it was more than piquancy and the somber eyes; he forgot the lost quarter.

"The same Tyson," he nodded. "Here, I'll carry the parcel."

His touch recognized the familiar curve of the neck of a bottle. She read his surprise.

"Fire-water," she admitted.

"Do you use the stuff?"

"Do you think there is a devil in me?" she asked angrily. "It is for my father."

"Father?" he said with a start. It was difficult to connect the girl with parents. Then he remembered, with a shudder, the man with the reddish eyes and the silent laugh like the grin of a wolfhound. "Then there is a devil in your father?"

"Oh, yes. A very thirsty one, Señor Tyson."

"Padre Miguel told you that?" he asked dryly.

"No, no, no, no! Once he saw me give the fire-water to my father, and he made me say so many prayers—b-r-r—kneeling on a hard stone all the while—that my mind ached as hard as my knees before I was through. After that I was afraid to give any more fire-water to father for a long time."

"But at last?"

"At last—"

She stopped short, for a youth, in passing, laughed at the odd attire of Rona, and threw a word of ridicule after her in Spanish. Her dress, to be sure, was enough to rouse laughter among a quieter people than Mexicans. She wore a bright blue calico dress scattered with big white polka dots, and gathered at the waist with a crimson sash. The dress was cut off just below the knees, and left the bare brown legs and sandaled feet free. Her head-dress was a man's hat of soft, black felt, very wide-brimmed, and with a bright yellow feather thrusting up at one side. The spirit of the grotesque could not have been more fittingly arrayed.

In the mean time the boy had halted in the street behind them, and now stood, calling out his mockery and clapping a riding quirt against his bare legs.

"Listen!" gasped Rona, and set her teeth in unspeakable rage.

"Come along," advised Tyson. "Pay no attention to him."

But this was the unlucky instant chosen by the mocker to hurl his choicest and longest insult. Tyson could not follow the Spanish of it, but it set a sudden fire blazing in the eyes of Rona Carnahan.

She whirled and was after her tormentor. He had only time to shout once in alarm and cut at her with his whip—as well have struck at a cat! In an instant he was sprawling in the dust of the street, writhing, and the quirt in the strong hand of Rona lashed his half-naked body with strokes as loud as the cracking of a whip. Then he was up and raced down the street, shrieking in pain and terror, and every third or fourth step leaping into the air.

Rona hurled the quirt after him and stood clapping her hands, doubled up in an ecstasy of mirth. At length she came slowly back toward Tyson.

"It was an old whip and a very light one," she complained, "but three times, *señor*, I drew blood—once on the shoulders, and twice on the legs!"

And she let her eyes flicker half shut, and drew a long, slow breath of relish.

"If you had only had a blacksnake!" murmured Tyson.

"Ah, *Señor Tyson*, if I only had!" Then she stopped and placed her arms akimbo, frowning at him aggressively. "Are you mocking me, *señor*?"

Her hat leaned in one direction, and the yellow feather in another, and a long lock of shining black hair gleamed over her shoulder.

"Never!" said Tyson fervently. "I have too much respect for my hide."

Yet for all his effort he could not repress a smile.

"You do mock me!" said the girl, softening suddenly. "But I don't mind it. I almost like it—in you, *señor*. Is not that strange?"

"But you were telling me how you did not give the fire-water for a long time to your father, Rona."

"Yes. At first he was very sad. He would beg me for it. Once the tears went down his face, and my heart was sick and very small. But what could I do, *Señor Tyson*? I thought of the prayers of Padre Miguel, and the hard stones, *señor*!"

"Of course."

"Then he changed. He would be very angry. Once, twice, three times he caught me and he beat me. Usually he is like a child in my hands, but then he was a mountain lion. There is still a white mark on my shoulder—here!"

She pointed to the place.

"And still I remembered the many prayers, and the hard, hard stones. Well, he changed still again. He would sit in a corner and he could not look me in the eye, and he talked much of spiders with furry legs that were creeping up to spring on him. Sometimes he would yell very loud, and say that they were on him. But mostly he sat and watched them coming. And look, *señor*! I, also, could feel them coming by looking in his eyes! B-r-r!"

"I brought the Padre Miguel, and he said that my father was sick and made him lie down in a blanket and said many prayers. After a while my father said nothing at all, but he would lie picking at the edge of the blanket and biting his fingers. And all the while his eyes went from side to side—so—so!"

"But still you thought of the prayers and the hard stones?"

"For a while, *señor*. Then I went to El Toro."

"Who is he?"

"An Indian I know. El Toro came to look, and he said that there was a devil in my father—a black devil that was very thirsty and needed the fire-water to drink. So I went and got more fire-water and brought it, and I did as El Toro told me—I gave him just a little bit in a cup. Ah, how he would cry and make a sad noise for more! But I never gave it.

"He beat me again, but I had hid the bottle and he could not find it, and I told him that if he beat me I would never, never give the devil another drop of fire-water. So at that he was very much afraid. But after a while he saw no more spiders and he did not roll his eyes. And every day I give him a little in the cup; twice." So when the devil found out that he could have no more, he took that little and left my father in peace."

"How does it come, Rona, that Padre

Miguel, who knows so many things, did not know about this?"

"Foolish!" she said scornfully. "He is talking all day and all night with the angels and the blessed saints. But how should he know anything about the devils and their ways? Besides, this devil in my father is a very strong devil, for see what he drinks for water?"

And she tapped the bottle in the arm of Tyson.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TALE OF A FACE.

THEY had left the outskirts of the town while she was talking, and now, rounding the dam, they circled down and then into the basin of the Chiluah. She was like a play to Henry Tyson. She walked at his side and yet she was upon a stage, and he sat among the audience in front and watched her from a distance.

It was a very odd feeling. Nothing like it had ever come in the life of Tyson before, for he had known many an attractive girl, but none like this child of the desert. Infinite, vague possibilities centered around her. That step, alert and buoyant as his own, promised to lead them into unknown adventures. Guided by her, he seemed about to enter a strange, enchanting realm.

The moment they reached the valley proper, she seemed to cast off all restraint, entering her own domain, and she accepted him as a part of it. She took off her hat, and walked along, swinging it in her hand. Her shining black hair had been gathered under the hat in an uninspired knot, from which sundry strands escaped, but now a single shake of her head sent a dark cataract over her shoulders.

"Where is the tie I gave you to bind around your hair, Rona?" asked Tyson, with some malice.

"That I have given away again," she returned carelessly.

"I am sorry for that," remarked Tyson, "because it's very bad luck to give away a gift."

"I could not help it," she answered. "You see, he liked it."

"Who?"

"The Big Man."

"Ah?"

"I am to marry him some day."

This was worse than the discovery of her parentage. If it was hard to imagine the girl living with a father, it was impossible to think of her obeying a husband.

"He will lead an active life," observed Tyson.

The girl halted. She faced him in her aggressive manner, arms akimbo, and then laid firm hold upon his shirt front.

"Hear me, *señor*," she said, in a voice as soft and velvety as the purr of a cat, "I have many times heard you laugh at me, and then Rona also has laughed. But still more times I have guessed at you laughing deeply and silently inside. I have seen a smile in your eyes. I do not like it, *señor*, and if I see that smile again—" She considered him searchingly from head to foot as one who sought a vulnerable point.

"Would you set the Big Man upon me?"

"I keep one friend with me always," she answered, and pushed down her broad belt enough to expose the hilt of a poniard.

"Then I shall keep at arm's length when I smile."

"A long arm," she said savagely, and then, infuriated by the continual glitter of his eyes, she snatched out the slender knife, caught it deftly by the point, and flung it from her, a whirling flash of light.

It was buried half the length of the blade in the trunk of a sapling, and Tyson heard its angry humming distinctly as it quivered in the wood. "Take warning, *señor*!" said Rona, and she drew the bright steel from the tree with a violent jerk.

"I would not laugh if I could help it," said Tyson, "but to confess the truth, Rona, there is a devil in me like the one in your father."

"A devil?" she cried, and recoiled a horrified pace.

"Your father's makes his throat dry, but mine is a mocking devil."

She crossed herself swiftly, and murmured something inaudible.

"I knew," she nodded at length, "that you were not like other men. Even Señor Kennedy is not like you."

"He lacks a devil, perhaps."

"It is true," she answered seriously.

"But he may have one before long."

"How do you mean that, *señor*?"

And her hand slipped under the broad sash.

"It was my devil that spoke in me," said Tyson, and he smiled openly upon her.

She stood tiptoe, as if the force of her anger made her light as the wind; then she snapped her fingers above her head, and burst into laughter. It blended pleasantly with the woodland noises.

When she could speak: "Even *Señor Kennedy* would not have faced me then. You are brave!" More laughter, and then: "Why do I like you so much, *señor*?"

She swung closer to his side as they walked on.

"Is it I whom you like or the devil inside me, *Rona*?"

The wide black eyes glanced up and dwelt solemnly upon him.

"Indeed, *Señor Tyson*, I fear *Padre Miguel* will give me many prayers to tell, and my knees shall ache again from the hardness of the stone!"

She sighed.

"I do not wish to be wicked—no! no! But to be good always is like eating meat without salt. Is it not, *señor*?"

"Exactly."

At the mention of food his stomach clave to his ribs, and his head whirled.

"Well," he said, "as for the bit of silk, I hope it brings no bad luck to you. Perhaps there's a difference, since you gave it to the man you love."

"Love?" she echoed, and then her laughter went through a bright cadence again. "Ah, *señor*, I do not love him!" The agile fingers snapped. "Not so much as that!"

"The devil!" gasped Tyson.

"But he has seen the face."

"What's that?"

She frowned.

"You know very little, *Señor Tyson*."

"Almost nothing."

"You are smiling again! Well, I shall say one prayer for your devil to-night,

señor—and two for myself! But I shall tell you about the face. Look back!"

She turned and pointed a rather melodramatic arm down the valley. *La Blanca* and *La Cabeza* rose doubly tall and very dark with the late sun behind them.

"You see the mountains?"

"Ah?"

"Would you ever guess that they are men?"

"Never!"

"Yet it is true. A very many days ago there lived two men, one in the west and one in the east. They were both so very tall and so very strong that no other warriors could stand against them. They were so big that they used whole pine trees to make a fishing-rod, and they fished in a big water and pulled out fishes bigger than horses."

"Regular whales, eh?"

She flashed a sharp glance at him, and then went on, slowly, as though she dared him to smile again: "Six, ten, twenty of these fishes they would catch for a single meal, *señor*!"

She waited.

"Wonderful!"

She sighed with relief that he had not laughed.

"It is true. So *El Toro* has always told me, and never changed a single word in twenty tellings."

"Then it is gospel, of course. Go on, *Rona*."

"And when they left the great water they would kill in one day twenty bulls—and eat them, *señor*, for a meal! Think of that!"

"I *am* thinking of it!" groaned Tyson, and drew his belt still tighter, for there was a burning pain in his vitals. His newly appeased hunger had returned in no small measure.

"Does it seem possible?"

"Twenty bulls for a meal? Why, well roasted, with the trimmings—very possible indeed. To have lived in those days—"

It was impossible for him to continue; he was choked.

"Yet I suppose," she confided, "that they had only one meal in many days. Otherwise, they would have soon cleaned up

the range, you see. I asked El Toro this, but he did not know.

"Now these great warriors went everywhere across the land and as I have told you, *señor*, no one could stand against them. Their skin was so thick that the greatest chief could not drive an arrow through it, and they minded the prick of a spear no more than I mind dry stubble. So they went everywhere looking for someone to fight, and they had bad luck in finding him until at last the man in the west decided that he would fight the Great Spirit.

"So he began to pile mountains one on the other to climb up to the sky and pull down the great Manitou, and the Manitou watched him and grew afraid. Mind you, he was not afraid of fighting the man of the west, but if the mountains were once piled high enough then every warrior on the earth could climb up it to the happy hunting grounds, and there would be no one to pray any more to the Manitou. Which would have made him very lonely, *Señor Tyson*, would it not?"

"Naturally! A child could see that."

"Of course! So he thought a long time, and at last he came down in a dream to the warrior of the west and told him in the dream that there was a man in the east just as tall as he and just as great. So when the warrior of the west woke up the next day, he tore up the biggest oak he could find for a club, and started east to find the other giant.

"But the Manitou had come in the same sort of dream to the warrior of the east, and told him of the man of the west, and the man of the east woke up the next day and tore up the greatest rock he could find—the whole top of a mountain, *señor*! and he started west.

"So the two giants met—even here, *señor*! Ah, what a thing it must have been to see! Their heads were in the clouds. The birds of the air flew from all over the world to watch the giants fight. Oh, to have been here!"

And she clapped her hands in an ecstasy.

"The man of the west lifted his great oak tree, the father of all oak trees, and whirled it around his head, and the sound

of it in the air was like the screaming of a whirlwind. And the warrior from the east heaved up his rock, and it blotted out the sun.

"But when the Manitou looked down on them he was sorry, for he saw they would kill each other at the first stroke; and he did not wish that the biggest men he had ever seen should die. So he thought what he should do.

"Then he went and lifted all the pile of mountains which the warrior of the west had made, and he brought it and dropped half of it on the man of the east, and buried him out of sight. Then he dropped the other half on the man from the west. And he was buried! The great spirit, you see, is very strong."

"He must be, *Rona*!"

"Now, the man of the east went to sleep, and he still sleeps. But the man of the west, he would not go to sleep, though there was such a great blanket of earth over him. No, *señor*, he began to fight and heave up his head, for he is a fierce giant, and so he has worked his head higher and higher until now it is almost out of the mountain.

"It is true! Now, many days ago the Comanches lived in all the valley of the Chihuahua, and they learned that sometimes men can look at La Cabeza—that is the man of the west—and see at his top something that looks like a head. And they learned that the man who sees that face will in one year either marry the girl he loves or else die. You see, *señor*?"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOTTLE BREAKS.

"I BEGIN to understand," murmured Tyson.

"Do you believe?"

He looked at her sharply, but her eyes were wide with apparent credulity.

"Why not?" he nodded. "Why not believe it? I've heard stranger things than that in my life."

But to his utter astonishment she burst into her soft, yet far-heard laughter.

"You believe? You are either a very great liar or a very great stupid, *señor*."

"Confound it, Rona, if you don't believe the thing yourself, why do you tell the story?"

She shrugged her shoulders, frowned, and then dismissed the troublesome question with a shake of her head.

"One never can tell," she answered. "There may be something true about it."

"And this fellow, this Kennedy, has seen the face? What is it?"

"It is seen at sunset when the shadows fall black across the valleys of La Cabeza. This, El Toro has told me."

"So it must be true. And had this Kennedy of yours heard the yarn before he saw the—face?"

"How should I know, *señor*? All I know is that he saw it, for he told me so. And should I let him die in a year? A man so young and so very big? Ah, no!"

"And Kennedy the—Kennedy is to marry you! When?"

"In a very few days. The year is almost at an end."

"You put it off to the last, eh?"

"Why not?"

"Well, I suppose you'll both be very happy. You like this Kennedy, eh?"

"He has much money. Yes, I like him."

"H-m-m!" mused Tyson.

"But you, you do *not* like him?"

"He may be very well—in his way."

"I have seen him shoot a little bird so high—as high above as that tree-top—shoot it with a revolver, *Señor Tyson*."

"A bad man to meet on a dark night. I don't doubt it. Now what would you say, Rona, if I were to be wearing that same bit of yellow and black silk the next time I see you?"

"He would not give it to you," she said, shaking her head at the idea.

"And why not?"

"Because I gave it to him. That is clear."

"But if I took it?"

"Took it? From *him*?" She laughed softly as ever, but it was not a pleasant laugh to hear.

"I would like to see that time when you take it from the big man." Her cold and calculating eye swept him as though she were imagining the places where the bullets from the unerring gun of Kennedy would strike.

"Nevertheless," he said, "I shall be wearing that same tie the next time I see you."

Her eyes widened marvelously.

"Would you fight for it?" she whispered.

"Perhaps."

Then, as a little silence fell:

"Would you object to that?"

But for answer there was a little, contented sigh, and no words. It was so uncanny—it made the blood of Tyson run so cold—that he stared, fixedly at the girl and paid no attention to his footing. The result was that his heel caught on a sharp, projecting rock, and he was flung to his knees; the bottle of whisky crashed into a thousand tinkling fragments. A wail from Rona brought him to his feet.

She was on her knees trying wildly to scoop up some of the precious stuff in the hollow of her hand. But the dry sand soaked up the fire-water in a single gulp.

It was then that she rose and fairly leaped at Tyson, the narrow blade of the stiletto glittering above her head.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

KNOWLEDGE

BECAUSE she stepped in my heart one day,
Where never a step before might win,
I know what grace fills an empty place
When the Well Beloved comes in.

Because she went from my heart one day,
I know as never another one
The lonely gloom of a crowded room
When the Well Beloved has gone.

Theodosia Garrison.



Mirrors

by

Roy W. Hinds

THE pool lay crystal-like at the base of a rocky shelf and Roper's parched lips had almost dipped into the cool water when he drew back with a gasp of horror. A terrible face, gaunt of lines and scraggly of beard, was thrown back to his fevered eyes from the limpid depths.

For a moment he thought he had seen the face of another man staring up at him, like some wild beast about to spring. He had not reckoned on this great change.

The murder had been done five days ago and this was the first time he had drunk in daytime. At night the pools and creeks had not been mirrors to him—and the change of five days burst upon him with a crash. There had been no gradual preparation. Thinking of himself as he looked a week ago, he hardly knew himself after five days as a fugitive in the wooded hills.

But neither the gaunt face nor the knurly beard, nor yet the fevered eyes, gave him such a pang of horror. It was none of these things which caused him, kneeling on the brink of that pool-mirror, to tremble as though each nerve were a twanging harp-string, and to clasp his hands to his eyes as though to shut all the world from vision. It was none of these things which cracked his dry throat with a wrenching sob, and made of his breathing a mere fluttering in the breast.

Across his broad forehead was a smear of blood, its scarlet undimmed by the soils of the forest—a smear as red as a flaming sunset.

About him the hills towered, seeming to hem him in. Spearing upward from the shoulder of a near-by crag loomed the gaunt shaft of a dead tree, gnarled and stripped of all foliage—up-pointed like an accusing finger. The floor of the little valley was level and bush-clumps spotted its verdure. It was not unlike a great chamber of justice, with the silent hills sitting round about in judgment. Roper knelt at the pool as though in supplication at the feet of Doom.

Impulsively, he shut tight his eyes and plunged hands into the pool, swiping his forehead again and again with the water. He rubbed furiously and then, when the ripples had quieted, he gazed into the limpid depths.

Mirrored back to him yet was the livid stain, lessened neither in outline nor in glare.

He gave a rasping cry of despair and fell backward on the grass—eyes shut tightly, as though fearing to gaze even into the sky. He lay until burning thirst again drove him to the water, and when he drank it was with eyes still closed. When he had finished drinking, he slowly opened his eyes. Yes, it was still there—a red daub against his skin.

He lay back on the grass, a strong man from whose breast hope had fled. He lay thus for an hour, not caring how near was pursuit and with the panorama of his crime reeling across the screen of his fancy in endless procession.

He saw the cabin thirty miles back in the hills. He saw the object of his revenge sitting in the doorway just as evening was coming on. He saw himself peering from the forest, years of hatred in his eyes and the twitching of blood-lust in his fingers.

Occasionally he saw the woman pass across the doorway of the cabin, with the man in the doorway ever between them.

Curse him! He had come between Roper and this woman five years before, and even in the solitude of these woods, he still unconsciously sat between them. He sat like some eternal sentinel, forever to keep Roper from the woman who once was his by love and by law.

In vision, Roper again saw the woman come up behind the man in the doorway. He saw her hand lying upon his shoulder, and he saw in her eyes the light—the light which once had shone for himself, but which now made of his blood a molten current of wrath. He remembered how he had to grip himself and set his teeth to keep from shooting both of them down from where he crouched in the forest. He had not been ready to slay them yet. Years of thirsting hatred would not be slaked by so merciful a climax.

He looked again—and saw the woman's cheek bend to the man's. He saw them thus for a minute, and then she sat beside the man—one arm about his neck, his arms about her body, their faces merged seemingly into one. It would be fine to kill them thus—when they were so happy—but it would be far sweeter to kill them in the fashion he had planned.

He saw them sitting thus until full darkness had come on—and, though he could not see them, still he knew they were sitting there, close together, always close together.

And then, as the man and the woman still sat in the doorway, Roper saw himself creeping from the forest—creeping like a reptile from the swamps up onto the white beach of happiness.

And then Roper wondered if he had not been crazy—if he were not so still. For the sweetness of his revenge had grown bitter. Lying on the brink of that pool, he flogged it again and again from his

thoughts—but always it returned, like a mangy dog slinking back to a forbidden door-step.

Though he tried not to see, yet he did see himself coming upon the man and woman out of the darkness. He saw them rise as he, a pistol in each hand, bade them rise. He saw them step from the cabin and he saw them back against its walls, hands stretched high. He saw the woman, at his bidding, get a clothes-line and bind it round and round the body of the man—bind him helpless.

Then he had cursed them. Over and over he cursed them. He told them, there in the darkness, that he was going to kill them. He was going to torture the man before the eyes of the woman—and then he was going to shoot the woman. He heard her plead for a quick death for both. He talked to them of former times and gloated over the thing he was about to do.

As the man lay bound upon the ground, he saw himself struggling with the woman—finally he saw her, also bound, lying near the man.

It was then that he had conceived the hideous idea.

He had remembered the woman falling in love with the man's eyes. He had heard her, in sleep, speak of the man's eyes—just a mere word, but enough to set his heart aflame with jealous rage. For five years he had planned to make of their death a terrible thing, but not until he had them at his mercy did he think of destroying the man's eyes—his hated eyes—before the eyes of the woman. In all his fury, and it had been five years of fury, the thoughts of this man's eyes had been uppermost—and now he got sweetness out of the idea which would make his triumph happy beyond measure.

And in all this time of preparation, the man on the ground spoke but once.

"If you're going to kill us," said he, "kill her first—quick; and then torture, or do whatever you want, with me."

But the plea of the doomed man had fallen on unheeding ears.

The man at the pool wondered again if he had not been crazy. He couldn't conceive, now that his revenge was com-

plete—or as complete as he could wish—just why his hatred had been so deep. Even though the woman lived, it were far better for her if she had died, too. She was suffering more, living, than he could have made her suffer in dying.

Why had he been so fiendish when he had them at his mercy? Ah! He had it. It was the light in the woman's eyes. Had he not seen that light, glowing for another man, maybe he would have been more merciful. That was it—the light in her eyes. He could see it now, burning steadily, resolutely, in the doorway of the cabin—a light which would burn before him forever.

And then, as the crime came surging over him again, he saw himself entering the cabin and lighting a kerosene-lamp. He saw their bed. He saw the table at which they ate. He saw the clothing of the woman and the clothing of the man lying and hanging about—close together, always close together.

He saw the kitchen stove, the supper coals of which had still been glowing. He saw the huge poker hanging in a rack against the chimney. And now he saw its tip thrust among the coals. He saw the tip taking on a faint glow, the redness of it slowly melting into the redness of the coals. He saw himself, armed with the singeing poker, stepping out of doors. He saw again the stars gazing down upon the hideous scene—not one of them brighter than the iron brand he clutched.

Then he saw the man, who somehow had worked his arms loose, trying to rise. He had let him get to his feet. He saw him totter, his ankles bound, against the side of the cabin. He heard the woman scream—and then he remembered that the man had cheated him of his design.

The man had clutched his throat, and for the life of him he had not been able to lay the poker against his face. The fellow was a giant in strength, and even though his legs were bound, his free arms had been powerful enough to keep him off. He had been agile beyond belief. The poker had singed his clothing and his hands, but not once did it touch his face.

He remembered the poker waving about in the air—thrusting, parrying, to carry out its fiendish mission. And again he heard

the woman scream—heard her cry as the man again clutched his throat.

"Kill him, Jim!" she cried. "Hang onto him, Jim—kill him!"

And then he remembered the rage which had come over him—with this woman whom he madly loved crying for his death. He recalled shooting the man down—shooting him again and again. He heard the shots echoing back from the ringing hills. He saw the poker, hot, but its redness faded, lying across the dead man's arm. He sniffed again the odor of burning cloth and flesh. He saw the face turned up in the starlight.

Then he remembered dragging the body into the cabin. He had an insane desire to see them both dead in the place where they had been so happy. He had seen blood on his hands—and he had stopped to wash them. The woman was in a swoon when he stepped again outside.

He did not shoot. Her white face had awed him. Had she been unbound and fighting, undoubtedly he would have slain her. But he couldn't bring himself to the task as she lay helpless. The longer he looked upon the white face, the farther had his resolution slumped. A rush of terror had seized him. The white face of this living woman had been more ghastly than the dead.

He had bent over her. She lived. He had unbound her, and left her lying there in the starlight. He had fled into the forest—crazed by his deed. The lust for revenge had faded and the horror of fresh murder was upon him. He would gladly have undone it if he could.

The days which had intervened were hazy. He remembered wandering, wandering—and that was all. From time to time he fed from the pack he lugged over his shoulder. He remembered these things, but mostly he remembered the blood that had been upon his hands—and he remembered the stain that even yet was on his forehead.

And then he wondered if he had not been crazy—if he were not still crazy.

He would see. If he still saw the stain upon his forehead, he was crazy—for surely no stain could linger that long. He crept to the pool and shut his eyes. Then he

washed and washed at his forehead—furiously. With dripping hands, he rubbed until the flesh nearly left the bone.

Then for some time he knelt quietly over the pool—eyes still shut; fearful of what he would see when he dared open them.

He saw what he had seen before—the red splash on his forehead.

He did not cry out nor fall backward this time, for he grimly told himself he was insane and that he must be calm if he wished to coax back his reason. He even took time to study the outline of the imaginary stain, assuring himself over and over again that it was not there, yet with his eyes he saw it.

It was uneven of outline—three inches long and perhaps a half-inch wide at one point. It was just such a stain as he might have made by drawing a bloody hand across his brow. He didn't remember whether he had done this. That was no matter, anyway—the stain was not a stain at all; it was a figment of his tortured fancy, no more real than the mirages he had often seen in the desert.

Then, with freshening horror, he saw what it resembled. It was in outline like a blood-stain he had seen on the cheek of the man he slew.

He remembered it now. He had seen it on the face turned up in the starlight, and again as the body lay under the yellow glow of the lamp inside the cabin. There was no doubt about it. It was that very stain transferred to his own face. It had been the only stain on the face of the dead man. Most of his shots had gone into the man's breast. One had crashed into the side of his head, but the blood from that had not flowed onto the face. He didn't know how it had got there. Possibly when he had dragged the body into the cabin.

But enough it was that he saw—or thought he saw—the stain on his own face. Surely he must rest. He must sleep. He must ease his nerves. He scarcely remembered anything since he left the cabin, but he did remember that he had slept but little.

That was the trouble. That was why he saw this stain. Why, surely—he could close his eyes and still see the stain. He could still see the face of the man and the

woman. He could still hear their voices. And *they* weren't there—any more than this stain was there.

It was all imagination—a trick of his fancy. A sound sleep would banish all these fantasm. And then he would be himself again. He could make good his escape with some sort of system, instead of roaming like a wild man in these desolate hills.

He lay down on the grass and wondered if this would be a safe place to sleep for the night. Mechanically he drew the back of his hand—more sensitive of touch than his palms—across his forehead.

He could *feel* that stain!

It felt dry and rough. With staring eyes, he slowly brought his hand down and gazed at the spot which had brushed the stain. There was no mark upon the hand. A long time he stared at it—fearful even of moving, lest some new and horrible apparition confront him.

A long time he stared. He did not raise his hand to his forehead again; nor did he again gaze into the pool—nor did he think further of resting there. Instead, he shouldered his pack and plunged into the forest—walking, stumbling, running, staggering, until darkness found him exhausted in a hillside cave.

He slept that night, because he was worn down to the point where nothing mattered. He slept just where he had sunk down. He did not eat. He did not even take off his boots. He slept the long night through—without a dream. And he awakened wondering if the stain were still there.

He wondered, but he dared not take pains to find out. He assured himself that the best way to get back his reason was to forget that fanciful stain—and he could forget it only by ignoring it. He would cheat his fancy. He would not even feel for the stain, nor look for it again in water-mirrors.

He ate heartily from his pack. He was greatly refreshed, and left the cave feeling quite cheerful. He drank, with eyes shut tightly, from a creek—and even started off with a humming song. Surely, sleep was a wonderful thing.

Continuing his journey, more leisurely

now, he realized he must make for a settlement he reckoned to be twenty miles away. He had seen that his food was scant—he must have another stock to last him to the railroad thirty miles beyond the settlement.

This settlement was isolated from all the world. They would not look for him there, because it was the longest way to the railroad—and they would assume that he had taken the shortest cut. Had he gone south from the cabin instead of west, he could have shortened the trip to the railroad by forty miles.

But he had had, even in insane frenzy after the murder, judgment enough to follow out a plan conceived in calmer moments. Yes, he would make for that settlement. He could reach it easily by night-fall.

Then he took to studying his clothing for blood-stains. He brushed the dust off as best he could and looked every garment over carefully. There was not a mark. He was thankful for that. There was not a thing about him to suggest the crime—unless—

A great idea came to him. He would meet people in the settlement. He would watch them closely to see whether they found anything strange about his forehead. He could tell by their eyes. If they gazed curiously at his brow, there was a stain there—a stain put upon him as a curse by an unseen hand. He wondered if such things really happened—and then he chuckled at the utter foolishness of the idea.

But still he could not wholly convince himself that there was no stain on his forehead. Oh, well, he wouldn't worry about it now. He would leave it to the people in the settlement. If *they* saw nothing there, it had been, as he thought, a delusion—and he need worry no more.

As the day went on he took to studying the woods, and the hills, and the birds that flitted like a chirping escort beside his path. In these diversions he banished his crime—and the stain. At midday he ate again, and flung crumbs to a squirrel that boldly came almost to his feet. He had a mind to shoot the animal and spit the flesh for food, but the little thing was so trustful that he let it live. He went on his way, humming,

whistling—and arrived at the settlement just as night swept into the hills.

He came, first, to a cabin which set apart from the grouped houses of the settlement. A bearded man sat in the doorway, smoking. He could see him even in the darkness, for there was a light within—and he "heloed" when he was still some distance away; the friendly call of an intruder meant to show he came not for evil. The man in the doorway got to his feet and peered into the darkness.

"Hello-o!" he called, and came forward.

"I've traveled far—and need food and sleep," Roper said. "Can you accommodate me?"

The man hesitated. "I've got money to pay," Roper added.

"It ain't that," the man said. "We ain't got no room here—but there's a store in the settlement where you can get grub; and maybe there's folks there that can bed you better."

"But I want a hot supper," Roper persisted. He wanted, more than anything else, to get into the light of the cabin and find what the man would see on his forehead.

"We can give you supper," the settler agreed. "Come on in."

Roper stepped into the interior of the cabin and found a woman and two small children there. Evidently the family had eaten, for the stove was cold and the dishes had been cleared away.

"Em," said the host, and Roper started, for the woman at the other cabin was named Emma. "Em, here's a trav'ler that's needin' a hot supper. Can you fix him up?"

"I guess so," said the woman—and she smiled.

Roper unshouldered his pack and set it in a corner, while the children, a boy and girl, stood hand-in-hand and stared in the manner of children to whom strangers were a novelty. Slowly Roper pulled off his slouched hat, the brim of which cast a shadow on his forehead. The forehead lay bare, but he stood some distance from the light—and he noticed nothing unusual in the eyes of the man and the children as they gazed upon him. The woman's back was turned as she stirred the fire.

"Hello, there," said Roper cheerily, seeking to make himself agreeable by coddling the children. He stepped toward them, but they shrank into the corner. As he continued to move toward them, they ran to their mother and clung to her skirts.

"They don't see much of strangers," the father explained, "and I reckon they're a bit skeery."

"Say 'howdy-do' to the man," the mother urged the little ones, but still they kept aloof.

Roper took two pennies from his wallet and sought to make friends by bribery, but still the children clung to their mother—and he could not coax a smile from them.

"They don't see many pennies, neither," said the father, "and I reckon they don't know what they be." And the fugitive abandoned his attempts to make friends of the children.

He followed the settler outside and washed his hands and face in a basin on a bench. The man asked him neither whence he came nor where he was going. Roper volunteered the information that he was bound for Atlas, and the settler told him it was forty miles away through the woods.

"But you can go to Goodale," he added. "That's only twenty-five miles from here, and it's on the railroad. You can ride the last fifteen miles if you get tuckered."

That's exactly where Roper was going—to Goodale, but he said: "I might as well hoof it clear to Atlas, I guess—'cross country."

The lamp sat on the table at which Roper ate—and he was in the full glare of it. The woman stood by the stove and the man sat in a chair. The children stood one upon each side of the mother—close beside her. All were facing him as he ate and talked.

He studied, guardedly, the eyes of the woman first. Occasionally he saw her gaze curiously on a line with his forehead.

He ate nervously—and did not look into the eyes of the woman again. Yet he knew she was watching him. But he did see the man also gazing curiously on a line with his forehead—and he saw the children staring at his brow!

He hastened through the meal, keeping his head bowed over the plate now. As quickly as he could, he pulled his hat on

flung a dollar upon the table and, with pack slung up, made off toward the grouped houses of the settlement.

He came to the little store and bought a stock of provisions, which the storekeeper helped him put away in his pack. On the porch of the store was a group of loungers, but it was dark there. Only the tradesman was inside with Roper. When he was ready to depart, the fugitive, with an effort at carelessness pulled off his hat and looked squarely into the face of the storekeeper. The man was giving him directions. Roper saw his eyes gazing into his own. Then he noticed that the man's words came slower—a slight stammer in his voice—as in surprise.

Then he saw that the man's gaze was fastened upon his forehead.

There was a moment of confusion between both men. Roper paid his bill and hastened away. As he plunged again into the forest, he fell to wondering if he had not been crazy—if he were not still crazy.

For a few minutes he wandered this way and that. Then a craving for the word of a friend came over him. He had a friend at Hackett, on the railroad off to the south—only twenty miles away, where the track bent up toward Goodale and Atlas. He knew this man would shelter him against all danger.

But what he craved above all things else was a friend to whom he could talk about the damnable stain on his forehead. He still doubted there was any stain there—he assured himself that he had only *imagined* the people in the settlement had gazed at his brow curiously. He still laid it all to a bad case of nerves, but he wanted the word of a friend.

"There's nothing the matter with your forehead, Dan," he wanted to hear the friend say. "There's nothing the matter—it's as smooth as mine. You're all unstrung, and need a rest."

That's what he wanted—the word of a friend. If he had that, the stain would fade from his imagination and he would be content. He craved counsel and cheer. So, in the night, he set off toward Hackett.

He miscalculated, and came to the railroad five miles above Hackett. All night

and part of the forenoon he had tramped, stopping only occasionally for a bite to eat or to drink at wild streams. Again he was in a fearful state of mind, torn of body and frayed of nerves. He stood on the railroad, doubtful as to which way Hackett lay and with the hot sun burning down upon his weary head.

He guessed right and started off down the track toward Hackett, too reckless now even to seek the shade of the forest on either hand.

There were telegraph lines into Hackett and before he came to the town's edge he roused from his stumbling lethargy sufficiently to make plans to avoid the houses. He would circle the town and come to his friend's cabin on the other side. He would lurk in the near-by woods until nightfall.

He arrived almost at the town and then swung off into the woods. But he had been seen.

Marshal Freeland was a very suspicious marshal. Had Roper gone straight into town maybe the official, who was driving a horse and buggy on a near-by road, would have given him but scant attention. But Freeland saw him skulking into the woods, and he tied his horse and followed.

He trailed Roper through the woods and clear around the town, and saw the fugitive fling off his pack and his hat, and sink to the ground. In a moment Roper lay flat on his back, with a grassy hummock for a

pillow. His face—and forehead—were in full view.

Then Marshal Freeland dropped his gun on the man and bade him rise. Roper listlessly obeyed, stretching his hands upward. The marshal came close and intently scrutinized the fugitive's forehead. The gaze shot a fresh rush of terror through Roper.

"You're Dan Roper," Freeland announced, positively.

"Yes," said Roper.

"I thought so. They said to look out for a man with a scar on his forehead."

"A scar?"

"Sure, a scar," said the marshal. "You don't expect to swipe a red-hot poker across your face and get away without a scar, do you?"

"A red-hot poker—a scar," breathed the bewildered Roper.

"Come now—don't try to crawl out of it! The woman told the whole story. I know how that poker scraped your face when you was tryin' to burn his eyes out."

"I don't remember—I don't see—"

"I guess you're still loony," interjected Marshal Freeland. "She said you looked like a crazy man when you was leanin' over her—and her makin' out as if she'd fainted. She saw that burn on your forehead—and said you didn't seem to pay no attention to it. I guess you had too much on your mind to think about a burn. It's a nice red blister now, all right! Come on."

CUPID'S DOUBLE

AND it's Cupid that has a fine double,
 Sure he must be an imp or an elf;
 Could the little blind god be a seeing,
 Then he wouldn't know which were himself.

When wee Cupid wounds hearts with his arrow,
 It is love-tipped and causes sweet pain.
 And the victim just spends the time wishing
 That the small god would shoot him again.

But alas, and alack, for his double!
 Of his blarney he means not a thing.
 By this secret, the spalpeen, you'll know him.
 Whist! He hasn't the sign of a wing.

Cora Lapham Hazard.

The Caravan of the Dead

by Harold Lamb

Author of "Marching Sands," "The Sunwise Turn," etc.

*"The stars are setting and the caravan
Starts for the dawn of Nothing. O, make haste!"*

CHAPTER XXIV.

FEAR.

THERE was no mistaking the intent of the flattened body, the purpose in the head pressed close to the gunstock. The ferns must conceal the native from the keen glance of the Arab.

Iskander moved slightly, to draw a cigarette from the packet he carried in his girdle. At this the man behind the ferns looked up, only to settle down to his sight again. A brown hand closed upon the trigger-guard.

"Iskander!" she cried, almost screamed, "look out, in front of you!"

Startling as the girl's voice coming from directly overhead must have been, the quick-witted Arab did not look up. He slipped behind the boll of the tree while Edith was still speaking. There he drew a long, first puff at his cigarette, and exchanged a low warning with Mahmoud—the *hakim* being still unseen by the slayer behind the thicket. Not even then did Iskander, experienced in the vicissitudes of mountain warfare, raise his eyes from the surrounding forest.

"How many men, Mees Rand?" he asked quickly. "And where?"

"One, that I can see," breathed the girl. "Behind the ferns under the tamarisks. He was going to shoot you with a rifle."

"Good. Is he a white man or a native?"

For a fleeting instant Edith's newly

cherished hope flamed at this mention of the nearness of possible rescuers. Then she reflected that a follower of Major Fraser-Carnie, or her father, would hardly act in the manner of the skulker behind the ferns.

At her answer Iskander spoke briefly with Mahmoud.

"It was the will of Allah that I should not have my revolver this morning," he remarked indifferently to the apprehensive girl. "But watch! You will see an unbeliever taste his own fear."

He remained where he was. Mahmoud advanced swiftly from the underbrush, his slits of eyes flickering over the ferns in front of him. He seemed to have no fear. Edith glanced at the man who, by now, had seen Mahmoud. His broad, ugly face changed. His mouth opened, and he gaped as if in the fascination of utter dread. The girl noticed that his hands trembled.

Then, with an animal-like grunt, the Sarta sprang up and ran, plunging through the thickets up the mountainside.

Iskander smiled and placed his hand to his lips.

"Sayak!" he called, in a long, high note that carried far. "Sayak! *Zikr!*"

As if an echo, a wailing cry answered from the upper forest. Another took up the word, more distant. Still another voice repeated faintly from a far-off height:

"Sayak!"

"You see." Iskander shrugged his

This story began in *The Argosy* for June 12.

shoulders. "Why should I bleed a dog that flees, when there are those whose task it is? Presently you will hear the death of the dog. Ah!"

He had noticed the telescope. Straightway he swung himself up into the branches, climbing swiftly, for all his loose robe. Edith waited, feeling like a criminal caught red-handed. She wished ardently for John Donovan, but he was below in the village.

The Arab swung himself beside her on the branch and took the telescope. Evidently he was familiar with such things. For some time, while the girl observed him, and Mahmoud squatted patiently beneath them, Iskander swept the valley. When the tower came within his vision his dark face tensed. His lips bore a slight smile as he turned to the girl, who was still nervous—an after-effect of the scene just enacted under the pines.

"Ohé, my little winged bird," murmured Iskander. "What do you think of those—riders upon the cliff?"

Edith fancied that he was trying to sound her, to learn what she had seen.

"Yahka Arik seems well guarded," was her response.

"It is." He spoke dryly, his glance probing her. "Yonder is the *kurgan*, the tower, where, as many hundred years ago as I have fingers on two hands, the men of Han—what you call Chinese—built a square castle. Many were the wars and the slaying of peoples in those times. Nor is it otherwise now."

With a snap, he closed the telescope and thrust it into his girdle, drawing at the cigarette he had not ceased to smoke. "Then came the Russians, without any right to these lands. They were strong men, but covetous and stupid. They put up a flag and made a speech about a boundary and customs. Because of the cold, they stayed close to the *kurgan*—all but one."

He nodded reflectively.

"All but one. Just a few years ago. He was like a vulture, and this vulture and his native allies alone knew of Yahka Arik. They came—once. They took many of our women, who were bathing in the women's pools in the shadow of the mosque. They took my daughter and her mother."

Iskander let the cigarette fall from his fingers. He spoke calmly, but Edith saw the glow in his deep eyes, and the veins that pulsed in his temples.

"Yess. It was the Vulture, Mees Rand. When the Sayaks came to the *kurgan* and asked for the thirty-nine women, the Russian commandant said he knew nothing of the matter. He said that the Alamans and Turkish followers had taken them. An Englishman who was hunting mountain-sheep—although I think he was never seen to shoot very many—had pitched his tent not far from the *kurgan*, and to him I carried our grievance. He said very little, but he talked with the Russian commandant, and after that there was much confusion and sending of messages from the *kurgan*.

"And presently the commandant and his men went away from the tower, journeying back, out of our sight. The Englishman was Dono-van Khan, and although his words were very mild, the Russian feared that he could call upon thousands of sword-points from the British in India."

The girl listened eagerly, gleaming for the first time an insight into the character of the adventurer.

"And so," explained Iskander, "we called him *khan*. Yet he would not admit that he was a soldier, like the Vulture. *Aie!* My daughter had seen fourteen summers. Her eyes were like twin moons, and the scent of her hair was like the jessamine flower. Her teeth were like white pearls. I did not see her again. It was told to me that her mother was sold in the Yarkand bazaar. But when I traced her to Khoten, and the slave-house of a merchant, she had died. But I have not forgotten the Vulture. Come, Mees Rand, I will help you."

He assisted her to the ground. Mahmoud rose and stalked down toward the village. Edith glanced at Iskander pityingly and curiously. Then she gave a startled cry.

Gun-shots had sounded from the mountain overhead. Two quick reports, followed by another. Mahmoud looked up and smiled.

"The dog is dead," said Iskander, with the assurance of one who knew he was voicing the truth. "Come!"

He strode along restlessly, a gnawing fever in his eyes. Edith had to run to keep up, and in so doing a slipper fell from one foot. Iskander noticed it.

"Why," she asked, "did that—that man run when he saw Mahmoud? The *hakim* was unarmed—"

"Fear is sharper than a sword. The dog looked upon the face of him who is master of the caravan, and feared lest he be sent away—"

Iskander broke off. Edith remembered that she had heard him use that phrase before. What did it mean—to be sent away? She did not know. But there was no mistaking the dread in the Sart's face. The man had feared something, and very greatly.

CHAPTER XXV.

A VEIL IS DRAWN.

THAT day was the one Edith finished her sewing. The new garment was complete. Alone, in the stone room, safe behind the canopy, the girl surveyed it with brightened eyes. She held in her hand a complete Sayak dress, modeled after those brought by Aravang at her request.

This was the task that had kept her busy. Donovan, with a man's ignorant conception of such matters, had not noticed the intent of the garment. Now, making sure that she was unwatched, Edith slipped out of her old dress into the new.

Putting on a heavy *yashmak* and, placing another veil across her tawny hair, the girl surveyed herself in the mirror. To all intents, except for her gray eyes, she appeared one of the women of Yahka Arik. To add to the effect she touched eyebrows and eyelids with *kohl*, likewise obtained from the obedient Aravang. She still wore the pair of slippers instead of her shoes. The long, black outer garment which covered the thin shirt and Oriental trousers, fell to her feet and concealed her much-darned silk stockings.

Edith draped several pretty necklaces—gifts from Donovan—about her throat, and felt that her masquerade was complete. Then she tiptoed to the door. The hall was

silent, and she saw that the outer court with its tiny garden was empty. The Sayaks were either in the mosque or on the way there.

Seeing this, the girl slipped through a postern door in the wall into the larger flower-garden beside the house. Once there, she advanced boldly into the path that ran through the village, her little slippers patting the dust diligently, until she remembered her new part and endeavored to walk like one of the native women.

Perhaps the attempt was not altogether successful. Edith's young body had never been obliged to bear such burdens as grain-sacks or her head a water-jar. But she had chosen the moment for her appearance in public wisely. Nearly all the women and children of the valley were in the temple. It was the hour before noon, and only a handful of belated men were hurrying along the paths, responsive to the wailing call of the *muezzin*.

Edith was going to the mosque. She would see the man Donovan called the *hadji*, and appeal to him not to let her companion run into danger. Now that she knew Donovan had befriended the Sayaks, she felt sure that this priest, whoever he might be, would listen to her. And why should the white man aid the Sayaks in their feud against the Vulture?

The thought of Donovan out of her sight and in danger was intolerable to this girl who had never loved before, but who now loved Donovan with an abiding strength that was part of herself.

Edith skipped along, anxious only to be within the temple. Then, as a bent Usbek peasant withered and toil-worn, glanced at her in some surprise, she moderated her steps to a more sober gait. She did not fear being spoken to. Observation had shown her that the strict privacy of women, a rule among all Mohammedan races, obtained in the valley. Other women were her only dread until she should reach the doors, and the few who were hastening to the mosque she girl avoided successfully.

Iskander's tale had aroused her sympathy. She had come to understand the harrowing life of the mountain-dwellers of Central Asia, the raids upon settlements by

men of other religious faiths, the counter-raids, the fierce, religious zeal which led men to slay each other over the difference of a word.

But she did not know that Yahka Arik had been inviolate from the surges of intertribal warfare, and this because of one thing: Fear. Only once had it been invaded. Nor was she aware of the deep spirit of protection for their women-folk that dwelt in the hearts of the Sayaks—a spirit that exhibited itself in a baser form in the isolation of the Turkish harem.

Edith, because she did not understand, did not need the code of these men: an eye for an eye, a blow for a blow, a life for a life.

Her heart was beating clamorously as she slipped past scattered groups of turbaned, swarthy men who scarcely looked at her, owing to the general reluctance, even to gaze upon a veiled woman who belonged to another man. But she felt no fear.

So she walked slowly across the dusty space in front of the mosque. The stone arch rose before her. Armed men, standing beside the gigantic trumpets that Donovan had called the "horns of Jericho" looked down at her grimly from the balcony over the entrance. And now the girl hesitated, feeling the eyes of the guards upon her.

For the first time she experienced an acute foreboding. Had the watching sentinels who scrutinized each newcomer, fingering their weapons, succeeded in penetrating her disguise? Nothing in their aspect revealed whether this were the case or not.

Edith halted, looking about her covertly. There was no other entrance—as she had made reasonably certain in her examination through the telescope. What was within the deep shadow of the arch? Were there other guards?

Then she heard quick footsteps in the sand, and a tiny figure drew near her, toddling toward the mosque. A Sayak child, seven or eight years of age, had fallen behind the groups of older worshipers. Realizing that her hesitation was attracting the attention of the watchers, Edith took the hand of the boy and advanced beside him toward the arch. He looked up at her

playfully, and trotted on manfully, perceiving no difference in this tall woman from other Sayaks—glad, in fact, of the aid of her hand.

A moment the clear sunlight gleamed on the white embroidery of her head-dress; then she passed into the shadow of the arch—and repressed an involuntary cry. Some steps led into the door of the building itself, within the arch, and on the lowest step a hooded Arab was sitting, scimitar across his knee.

"Peace be with you," the man murmured, not ceasing to look at her. Edith had often heard Donovan employ this salutation and its reply, but as she fumbled for the Turki words in quick alarm she heard the shrill voice of the child:

"And upon you, also, be peace!"

With that, woman and child passed by the sentry of the steps and entered the outer court, where Edith was surprised to see a multitude of slippers of all sizes and colors. While she wondered at this she saw the boy slide off his small footgear and go forward barefoot. She did likewise, trusting to the gloom of the inner chambers to conceal her stockings.

The murmur of a sonorous voice reached her. Edith advanced timidly between great pillars, and stood within the mosque itself. She saw a lofty space, half in darkness, into which light descended from a single aperture in the roof at the end opposite her. Slender, ornamented pillars supported a balcony with a carved wooden rail. Gold and silver ornaments lined the walls. The light reflected dully from broad gold plates inscribed in a manner strange to Edith.

She had not known that the mosque, which must have been built actually into a cleft in the face of the cliff, was so huge.

Directly in front of the ray of light that fell from the round opening in the dome, a turbaned priest in clean robes was reading from a heavy volume, bound in iridescent silk, a gold chain running from the clasp of the book to the neck of the reader. It was the voice of the priest she had heard.

The ray of light was full upon him, shining on the turban folds, and glimmering in a long, white beard. A majestic figure—a patriarch of his people.

Facing the reader was a silent multitude. Each Sayak, man and woman and child, knelt upon a small prayer-rug. Edith had seen them carrying these rolled strips of carpet to the mosque, and wondered what they might be. For a moment she feared they might notice that she carried no rug.

But the eyes of the worshipers were fixed on the *hadji*. The girl drew aside softly, walking forward along the side of the nave. Here she was behind the Sayak ranks, and sheltered somewhat by the row of pillars that supported the round balcony. The gloom was deeper in this spot. No one saw the standing girl. While she listened to the sonorous voice, quavering a trifle with age, she had the sensation of being present in one of the old cathedrals of Europe. Frequently, with her aunt and Arthur Rand, she had stood in this fashion, watching the reverence of another multitude, erected to the God of her faith. The impression passed as swiftly as it had come, when she gazed upon the bright robes of the Asiatics, the swarthy faces of the men, the veils of the women.

Then she noticed for the first time the vapor. So lofty was the opening in the dome, and of such small extent that the ray of sunlight moved steadily. When she entered it had rested on the pages of the book; then it passed over the priest. Now, while still resting upon him, it touched a rising cloud that Edith had supposed to be incense.

Where the altar of a cathedral would have been placed there was a raised lattice work of metal—bronze, brightly polished, or gold. It resembled the delicate marble kiosk of the garden of the stone house. Through the apertures of the fretwork a cloud of heavy vapor swirled up.

It rose against the opening in the dome, but—coming into contact with the air-current that swept downward through the hole—separated and coiled in a thin haze against the mosaic of the dome itself.

So heavy was the vapor, it might have been steam. The mosque, in fact, was warmed by it. Edith had fancied for a brief moment that it was incense, rising from a gigantic censer-bowl. Then she recalled the hot springs of the lower lake.

Evidently the mosque itself had been erected over one of the sources, and the vapor welled from the hot depths of the water.

The sunlight had just reached the vapor when the priest ceased his reading and lifted both lean arms. A high chant rose from his lips, and he turned to face what Edith still fancied the white incense. As he did so she reflected that this might be the priest of whom Donovan had spoken.

"*Nuri Muhammed s'all Allah!*"

And the multitude responded:

"*La il'oha ill Allah!*"

As one, the heads bent downward toward the breasts of the worshipers. Long folds of the white turbans were detached and laid over the left shoulder. As if performing a well-learned ritual, certain lines of Sayaks rose, with extended arms.

The sight of the concentric rings of multi-colored garments, the intent faces and the lifted hands made Edith draw back, fearful of observation. Utter silence had fallen on the mosque.

In the silence, the worshipers appeared to be awaiting something. She saw that they were gazing at the vapor. By now Edith realized that this was no ordinary Mohammedan mosque.

Then her lips parted in swift surprise.

In the intervals between the Sayak lines John Donovan was walking. He was hatless, and appeared bent on a certain course of action, for he was looking closely at the figures of the kneeling women.

No one molested Donovan. Apparently he was entitled to enter the mosque. He moved about as quietly as possible, seemingly desirous not to attract attention, but exhibited no sign of apprehension except that he was intent on his task of scrutinizing the veiled women. Edith felt that he had missed her, and had come to seek her. How Donovan had traced her to the temple she did not know.

Then the lines of standing men began to move from side to side. One voice, then another, took up a refrain:

"*Hai-hai! Allah, hai!*"

They placed their lifted hands on the shoulders of their comrades and swayed their bodies in cadence.

"*Hai-kai! Allah, hai!*"

It was a low chant that rose and echoed against the lofty dome. It grew into a rush of sound, a deep roar, in which the echoes were lost. Edith felt the beat of the passionate cry grip her senses.

Donovan did not halt. He had surveyed the further side of the temple carefully. Now he pushed through the moving men toward her position. The chant changed, as the men formed into long, sinuous lines that circled before the priest and the ray of sunlight.

"*Yah hai yah Allah. Allah Akbar!*"

At this the white man quickened his steps. He almost ran down the side of the nave, looking sharply into the shadows. Edith wanted to call to him, but did not dare. A few moments before she would have wished to keep her disguise a secret. Clothed as she was, how was Donovan to know her?

Yet she wanted him to recognize her. She felt the need of his protection, understanding how reckless she had been in coming. And when he halted to peer at her, she drew a deep breath. She would have spoken, but silence fell again upon the Sayaks.

For a long moment John Donovan was a man of stone, so keenly he scrutinized every detail of her clothing and figure. The girl trembled in the effort to keep from speaking. Then the man stepped casually nearer to one of the pillars and leaned against it with folded arms.

"Do not speak above a whisper," she caught his low voice. "The Sayaks must not hear us talking. Edith, why in the world did you come here?"

The girl's reasons for entering the mosque seemed all at once very fruitless to her. She had breathed a little prayer of relief when she knew that his glance had recognized her in the native dress and veil.

"I came—to see the priest," she whispered.

At that Donovan turned away, so that she could not make out whether he was angered or not.

"Wait," she caught his answering whisper, "until the Sayaks have passed out. The women would see through you."

His face was expressionless as he watched the actions of the priest. Edith saw that the sun's ray had fallen full on the swirling vapor. Color, limitless, impalpable, iridescent, flooded the vapor. A haze of shimmering green and purple and red hung from dome to wall. It was as if a veil of supernatural softness and beauty had been dropped from the sky.

The moving clouds of steam caused the radiance to vibrate and merge. No one color was to be seen for long; all hues glimmered and fused together, weaving a magnificent texture.

And in the heart of the steaming vapor the *hadji* had taken his stand. He had ascended the gold fretwork by some hidden steps, and now stood on the top of the grille, with clouds of steam rising on all sides of him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLE.

EDITH gazed at the apparition in bewildered surprise. The splendor of the flooding color had taken away her breath. She did not understand how the old priest, motionless in the stream of light, could survive the heat. But his aged face was tranquil, his eyes closed.

A murmur rose from the throng. Lips parted expectantly; dark eyes shone. Then the vapor and the temple itself were plunged in semi-darkness. The aperture in the dome had been closed.

Following an interval of quiet came the rustle of many bare feet as the Sayaks began to pass out of the mosque. Now that her eyes were more accustomed to the dim light, Edith could see them gathering up their prayer-rugs.

Her quick mind had caught the explanation of the radiant color of the vapor clouds. It could have been nothing less than a rainbow. Light from the opening in the dome had fallen upon the steam and gathered strength until the clouds of moisture reflected the prismatic coloring of the rainbow.

She had seen how swiftly such things appeared in the heavens on the heels on a

passing rain-storm. But the performance of the *hadji* was still beyond her understanding.

"It is a ritual," whispered Donovan, who had drawn nearer in the shadow, "that occurs only two or three times in a summer. Then the priest of Yahka Arik steps into that confounded steam. It does not harm him."

"Why?"

He hesitated, unwilling to explain further, but anxious not to reveal his own growing anxiety for her.

"You chose a bad time to come here, Edith. It is what the Sayaks call the miracle of life. This mosque is their holy spot. The spring underneath has a good deal of sanctity attached to it. Some old legend, you know. Just at noon the sun pierces the hole in the roof."

"It was beautiful," she murmured. "But to see the *hadji*—it gave me the creeps."

Donovan was watching the last of the Sayaks move toward the door. There were no sextons to close the mosque gates, which were open day and night, but the guards always remained, and to get the girl away, past those gates, unseen, was vitally important.

"Don't move from these pillars!" he warned sharply. "Wait until the rear-most Sayaks have gone from the entrance arch; near at hand, in sunlight, they would see through that dress at once. Edith, you were mad to come here—"

Impatiently he started forward; but the voices of worshipers still in the outer court arrested him. Within, the gloom of the vast mosque weighed upon the two. Edith found herself gazing from shadow to shadow fearfully, and listening for footsteps that she fancied were moving toward them. Impulsively she stepped to his side and took his hand, surprised to find it so chill.

"Are we in such danger?" she whispered. Then: "You came to find me."

This thought filled the woman with mute delight. She wanted him to understand that she also had been thinking of him. "I thought the *hadji* would help us if I told him everything—"

"Edith! You would have been sent away by Mahmoud, on the caravan of the

dead. That is the penalty for an outsider who sees the *hadji* in his mosque—"

He broke off as the dome opened again, letting the ray of sunlight stream into the depths of the temple. They had heard no movement, nor had they seen the hands that worked the aperture. Donovan's hand closed on her protectingly as his eyes sought the entrance.

"Dear woman, you must understand. The Sayaks are not ordinary Mohammedans, but are outlawed by the orthodox followers of the Prophet. They are preyed upon by Turk, Alaman, Buddhist, and Hindu—"

"Why?"

"They worship the sun."

Edith was silent, thinking of the ray of light, and the praying throngs that had raised their eyes to it.

"The *hadji* is their saint, Edith. And they have carefully concealed the real location of his temple from their enemies—"

She saw that while he spoke he was watching the folds of the heavy curtain that hung behind the vapor. Seeing this, she felt an impulse to flee from the mosque that seemed to be closing in upon them.

"We know—both of us," he went on quietly, "the secret of Yahka Arik. And every fanatical *mullah* from Constantinople to Kashgar would willingly lose his fingers and eyes if he could help tear down this temple of the sun—older than San Sophia, and a thorn in the side of Moslem political power—"

The curtain folds swayed, as if a breath of air had stirred them. The voices outside the entrance quickened, and Edith had the fleeting sensation of being encompassed in a trap. She pressed close to the man, who smiled down at her.

"We'll make it yet. Come, Edith."

The voices of the worshipers in the court were no longer to be heard. Edith could not help glancing behind her as they started from the shelter of the pillars. She had fancied that the curtain had parted, drawn back by a hand from within.

"How did you follow me?" she asked gently, wishing to hear from his own lips why he had sought her.

"Avarang. Don't fear that he will give you away. He lost track of you and became worried. He hunted me up. I knew if that beggar couldn't find you, something must be wrong. Then we learned from an Uzbek peasant that he had seen a Sayak woman come from the house and go to the mosque—"

Abruptly he thrust her back.

"Iskander and two others have come in," he whispered sharply. "Edith, go back to the wall. Hide."

The girl, her heart beating tumultuously, lost no time in slipping back into the shadow of the wall. A slight projection of the granite blocks offered a shallow nook for her slender body.

John Donovan waited, while Iskander, Mahmoud, and another—the Sayak chief—approached. They had seen him and advanced to where he stood. Iskander fronted him with folded arms. To the white man's greeting he returned no answer.

"Where is Mees Rand?" he asked slowly.

Donovan eyed him steadily, trying to guess how the Arab had come to look for the girl and how much he knew of her actions. The presence of Mahmoud and the chieftain was ominous. Still, he was reasonably sure that Edith's disguise had not been penetrated. For a space the two measured each other silently.

"Where is the white woman?" said Iskander again.

Donovan shrugged. "Does not Avarang know?"

"He knows nothing." The Arab tugged at his beard, as was his habit when aroused. "Speak, Donovan Khan. I know that she is here. The guards at the door brought me a pair of woman's slippers, left behind when all had gone. I have seen the slippers before. They belong to Mees Rand."

Listening, in her nook a dozen feet away, Edith thought of the pair she had discarded at the gate. Why had she not kept them on? She had instinctively followed the example set by the Sayak boy.

The Arab drew a hand from the breast of his robe. In it were the tiny upturned footwear of the white woman. Donovan looked from the slippers to Iskander's harsh

face, from him to Mahmoud and the chief.

"The door is guarded," observed the *manaps* softly. "And there is but one door. If you do not summon the woman, we will find her."

Donovan weighed the alternatives swiftly, and made up his mind. "Edith!" he called from set lips.

The girl hesitated only a second. It was hard to step from her place of concealment to face the three Sayaks. But she trusted John Donovan.

When she neared the Arab, he tore the veil from her face with his free hand. Mahmoud and the other peered at her. A sibilant breath escaped the *hakim*—resembling the hiss of a snake about to strike. It was echoed by the chief.

Iskander scrutinized the native garb of the girl, and his eyes narrowed.

"You came secretly," he said slowly. "You were here during the festival of the sun."

"I was here," she said boldly.

The admission seemed to surprise the two others, when it was translated to them. For a moment they stared at her. Then they conferred among themselves. John Donovan stood a little part, waiting. Edith gazed at him anxiously, but he made no sign. She saw that the muscles of his jaw were set.

Mahmoud had interrupted Iskander, speaking swiftly with an angry gesture. The *manaps* listened and turned to his chief. Although no word was exchanged between the two, an understanding was formed.

To Edith the situation appeared menacing, yet the quiet of the four men reassured her somewhat because she did not know that an Oriental masks his anger under calm. She now heartily regretted her foolishness in disobeying Donovan. She wondered why he was so silent. Surely he could speak, assure the Sayaks that she had not meant to spy upon their secrets!

Iskander then addressed Donovan.

"O Donovan Khan, this is a woman of your people. You know the law. Perhaps you will think it wise to leave the mosque rather than remain."

Donovan stiffened, but he answered quietly:

"I shall remain."

"So be it. Yet it is not wise. She is very fair. Why should you see her die?"

At this a short sigh escaped Donovan, the only sign that he had had his gravest fear confirmed. He stepped forward instinctively, and then mastered the stress of quick emotion.

"Is this the will of Mahmoud?"

"Aye." The *hakim* answered for himself. "Iskander would have let the woman go safely from the mosque, under a pledge of silence. But I have read the hearts of many women. I know that their tongues cannot be silenced."

"Yet I am free to go."

"That is the truth. But you we need. Likewise, it is written that a strong man is faithful to his word. We have no fear that you will voice the secrets of others."

Edith glanced from one to the other, trying to read their faces. She could not see that of John Donovan. All four were speaking quietly, as if discussing some small matter of common interest. Donovan knew that only in persuading the Sayaks to change their minds was there hope for Edith. Every faculty of his brain wrested with the task; still, he smiled.

"Mahmoud, you are a man. So are these two. You have the power of life and death in Yahka Arik, and your hand brought this white woman here. Verily, she came under your protection. She has done what you commanded, save in this. She healed my sickness."

It was the Sayak chief who answered harshly:

"The task of the woman is finished. Nay, it was Mahmoud, the all-wise, who lifted the shadow of sickness from your body. The woman did her share, as we intended. Now she is useless."

Iskander and Mahmoud nodded agreement. The chief went on:

"Much we have talked among ourselves how we were to deal with the woman. Verily, she has severed the knot of our perplexity by the evil stroke of her deed."

"It was the whim of a child," remonstrated Donovan.

"Yet a harmful whim. If she had known naught of Yahka Arik—and your faith with Yahka Arik had sealed your lips from speech to her of this—we might have granted her freedom. Now, she will die, yet not with pain."

"Nay," agreed Iskander moodily. "She is young, and her hair is like the light of the sun—as was that of my child. We will not set her upon the caravan. Besides, she is a white woman, and it is best her body should not be seen—without."

Edith touched Donovan timidly on the arm.

"What are they saying, Donovan Khan? I want to know. They seem to be—angry."

By way of answer he patted her hand gently. His keen eyes searched the faces of the Sayaks, as a condemned criminal might endeavor to read the faces of a jury assembling to announce a verdict.

"It is the law of the Moslem world," he began again, "that a blow should be dealt for a blow; a life for a life. Yet this woman has only penetrated the veil of what is secret with the eyes of innocence."

Iskander seemed about to speak. He had flushed, and a pulse in his throat beat strongly. Donovan glanced at him eagerly, but the Arab was silent.

"Truly you have described the law of the prophet," responded the chief. "Yet the law of Yahka Arik you know, and this woman knows."

"A spy from without must die," said Mahmoud. He placed a withered hand on the chest of the white man. "Do not grieve: a grave is dug for each of us, and we must lie therein. The woman will feel no pain. Watch, and you will see."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A PLEDGE IS MADE—

IT was Mahmoud who signed for Edith to follow him. As John Donovan was silent, she obeyed hesitatingly. The five—three Sayaks and the white woman and man—moved toward the rear of the mosque.

Here was the bronze grating, raised some few feet from the tiled floor, and behind it the damask curtain that hung in dark folds from the edge of the dome to the floor. Glancing up, the girl saw that the sun's rays had vanished; overhead, through the dome opening, a long cleft, dividing solid rock, was visible. Only for an hour, at midday, did the sun strike down this natural shaft in the rock.

Edith heard a dull purring sound from beneath. Underfoot there was a slight, continuous vibration as the hidden springs seethed and boiled. The heat rose from the vapor and touched her face.

Mahmoud had halted beside the bronze grille. Edith waited quietly, disturbed by the conduct of the Sayaks, but trusting that John Donovan knew what was in their minds and would safeguard her. She feared that in some manner of their own they were going to punish her.

"What is it?" she asked Donovan, her voice trembling in spite of her effort at control.

"Wait. Do not be afraid."

She tried to smile in answer, as Mahmoud took the veil from Iskander, who still held it, and wound it tightly about her arms and body. Then he looked up, spoke to the *manaps*, who slowly removed his own shawl girdle and handed it to the physician. Mahmoud turned to Donovan, who was watching from smoldering eyes.

"In this way there will be no pain, Dono-van Khan. We will bind the white woman and lay her upon the raised place. Then the hot vapor will creep into her throat. Soon she will be dead."

"No," responded Donovan, whispering.

The Sayaks faced him impassively. Seemingly they had expected such a remark. Mahmoud observed under his breath: "It were wiser that the white man should have gone from the mosque."

Donovan was smiling—a habit of the man when his thoughts were racing and there was danger to be met. In this manner he had smiled at Jain Ali Beg when he rode after the caravan.

"Mahmoud," he began slowly, almost painfully, "you must listen to what I have to say. Miss Rand is not a woman of your

people. She is innocent of evil. You will not slay her."

"A woman. No more. What is she but a beautiful slave? Aye, one made for the pleasure of men!"

The Sayak chief nodded assentingly. To these men womenkind was a minor form of life, subservient to the men, their masters.

Not so to the white man. "I love Miss Rand," he said.

Mahmoud stroked the girdle in his hand gently. "It does not avail. Others you will perhaps love. It is written that a strong man shall have many wives."

"Not a white man, Mahmoud. This is a matter beyond even your knowing. I shall love no other woman but Miss Rand. Her life is more than my life."

The Sayaks considered this gravely. Iskander had drawn back from the group. It was the stout chieftain who spoke:

"Nay, Dono-van Khan. For you have a mission to fulfil in Yahka Arik. Your life is more, much more, than that of this woman. Even as steel is more to be valued than iron. If she lives, the time will come when she will reveal the site of Yahka Arik to our enemies outside. Aye, and the hatred of the wolf for the wolf-hound is not greater than the hate of the orthodox Mohammedans for us—who worship the sun. She must be silenced, so that Yahka Arik will be inviolate."

"Aye," assented Mahmoud.

"The wolf-hound hunts," smiled Donovan, "and he has need of one who will put him upon the scent of the wolf. The falcon is loosed—but a hand must first release him. I am your friend, as I was when the vultures were driven from the tower, and the hour is near when you will hunt. Without me your plans will be like water cast upon the hot sand at midday. You need me, yet I will do nothing for you if this woman dies."

Mahmoud's bleared eyes narrowed. Donovan turned to him. "*Hakim*, you know that I am a man of my word."

"Yet—"

"And you know that a bargain between two righteous men is like a signed bond. Very well. I will make a bargain. Let Miss Rand live, and I will help you as we

have planned, to meet the vulture. I will pledge my word as surety that she will never speak of Yahka Arik outside the valley. I hope to marry Miss Rand."

Mahmoud weighed the girdle in his hand very thoughtfully. Edith looked at him with breathless interest. It was becoming clear to her that these three natives could do with her as they willed. She did not struggle to free herself from the binding veil. The nearness of the flooding vapor had struck apprehension into her heart. She wondered at Donovan's calmness.

The Sayak chief shook his head.

"It is not enough. We are no more than servants of *him*,"—he pointed to the curtain into which the *hadji* had retired—"and the law of Yahka Arik is binding. Miss Rand must die."

Donovan looked up at the circle of sky framed in the dome opening. He drew a long breath, and his shoulders stiffened. He had lost his point.

He knew that there was no hope in resistance. Iskander and the chief were armed. A cry from Mahmoud would bring a dozen Sayak guards from the barred door. Even if he could account for the three Sayaks—and, weaponless, this was impossible—he could not leave the mosque with the girl. Fleeting thought of seeking the *hadji*, as a last card to be played in the face of the Sayaks' will.

But, knowing the settled purpose of the men, he did not dare leave Edith's side, even for a moment. Instead, he turned swiftly upon the silent Iskander.

"Scion of Tahir," he said bitterly, "you have drawn sword in the army that was once mine. You and I are brothers in arms against the Turk and our foes. You know that I was once an officer. You have eaten the bread and salt of the English. Will you stand aside and see this thing done?"

The Arab bent his head.

"Aye, Iskander, and you once had a wife. I was willing to help you to your revenge. You, alone of these men, know the bond of a man's love for a woman, and the tie of fatherhood."

At this Iskander plucked at his sword hilt, his dark eyes roving. He attempted to speak, but his words were choked.

"*Effendi*," he muttered, "it is true that I have seen you as an officer among the English. Because of this, and the salt I have eaten, I spoke in your favor when you first came unbidden to Yahka Arik. But this is otherwise—"

"Your wife died, Iskander. Will you let the man who took her from you escape? I know his name."

"May Allah the Generous forgive!" The *manaps* turned a moody face toward them. "I will not see this woman die. Nay—I will protect her!"

His forehead was wet with perspiration that did not come from the heat of the steam. He laid a hand on his sword, glaring at the two Sayaks. But Donovan stepped forward. Iskander's assistance, potent though it might be, would not avail to safeguard Edith Rand.

True, the Sayak chief and Mahmoud might be dealt with, possibly killed if necessary. But Donovan guessed that hidden eyes were watching the scene; he knew that in the event of a struggle the alarm would be given—and if that happened, all was lost.

Edith would have spoken, anxiously. He shook his head at her smilingly. Iskander's aid would weigh in the balance, but not if a sword were thrown into the scales.

After his first outburst the Arab was impassive. The two Sayaks waited, with downcast eyes. Only the chief gripped a dagger in his girdle in a powerful fist. So deep was the mosque in the shadow, so quiet the group by the vapor gate, they might have been five worshipers gathered in prayer—except for the veil that bound the limbs of the woman.

A slight breeze passed through the shadows, cooling the damp foreheads of Donovan and Iskander and touching the yellow curls of Edith Rand.

The white man put hand to belt. But, as the Sayak chief looked up intently, he slipped loose the leather strap at his waist and held it out to Iskander.

"Man of Tahir," he said, "here is a cord to bind me. If they lay Miss Rand upon the vapor gate, you must bind me and put me beside her. I will not live, if she dies."

Iskander drew back as though a snake

had coiled in front of him. Mahmoud sighed. Donovan waited, his tall figure erect, the strap in an open hand. While four men kept silence, the balance of judgment was poised. There was no sword in the scales. Then some one spoke:

"The white woman must live."

They turned, and Edith uttered a cry of surprise. In front of the damask curtain stood the priest of Yahka Arik. His haggard face, veiled by a venerable beard, was almost invisible under the loose folds of a white turban. He looked from one to the other and nodded slowly.

"I have heard—I have seen."

The chief and Iskander released their weapons. Donovan drew a deep breath.

"I have seen the life of a man offered with that of the woman," went on the *hadji*, his sonorous voice awaking echoes under the dome. "A life for a life. It is sufficient. It fulfils the law, which is not alone of revenge, but of mercy."

Edith fancied that he smiled.

"O my foolish children! Did you think that the peace of Yahka Arik and its mosque rested upon the tongue of one weak woman? Let the white man and the woman go free from the mosque."

With that he turned, to disappear through the curtain, and the Sayaks bent reverent eyes to the floor. The master of the mosque had spoken.

At the door Iskander touched Donovan on the arm.

"Do not forget the pledge," he whispered. "Miss Brand must not attempt to leave the valley."

"I will not forget," said Donovan.

They found Aravang striding up and down, outside the guards, his broad face harassed. Seeing them he ran forward.

"Take the white woman to her house," commanded Donovan. "I must go with the Sayaks. There is much to be done."

Edith, once more in possession of her veil and slippers, lingered. Her eyes sought those of John Donovan. "Tell me," she begged. "I know we were—in danger."

"Perhaps." He laughed at the proscribed word. "After all, the mosque is not a safe place for inquisitive young women."

"I will never do anything you forbid again, Dono-van Khan," she promised contritely. "Never. What did the *hadji* say?"

"He said—" Donovan paused. "Well, for a heathen, he said a rather fine thing. Now, you must go with Aravang. Lunch is waiting—"

"Not," responded Edith firmly, "until you assure me that you are perfectly safe. And promise to come *right away* and tell me everything."

His glance rested long on her anxious face. He wanted to take her in his arms, to feel that she was still whole, to press his lips against the glory of her hair. Edith did not look away. So, Dono-van Khan laughed, just a little unsteadily.

"'Everything' may mean more—than you think," he whispered.

Not until she had passed across the open space with burly Aravang at her heels, both looking back at him more than once where he stood among the Sayaks, did he realize that she was actually safe. Then he turned on his heel and strode to where the Sayaks stood waiting.

Edith had no appetite for lunch—a thing that distressed Aravang. She sat on the small balcony overlooking the valley, resting her chin on her hand. Her thoughts strayed wilfully, seeking their own paths. Detail by detail, the scene at the mosque repeated itself before her fancy; the impress of the light veil still lingered on her limbs; she visioned the flash of Iskander's melancholy eyes; remembered the tranquil words of the priest—words that she could not understand.

What had it been all about? Edith was aware that she had been a spectator of men employing the full power of aroused personalities in a conflict in which Donovan had emerged victorious. But—so thought the girl—he must have paid some price for his success.

Why did he not come? She wanted him to tell her everything.

"Everything," she repeated, and the watching Aravang saw her face brighten.

The sun declined behind the ridge that backed the house. The coolness of its

shadow recalled Edith to herself. She went below and, for the second time that day, changed her attire.

When she emerged from her curtained compartment she wore the ball dress that had come with her from Kashmir. A scarf covered her bare shoulders. Her cheeks were rosy with the touch of the afternoon's sun, and the tawny hair was dressed low on her neck in the manner Donovan admired.

Aravang gaped, then grinned delightedly. His goddess had robed herself in a new aspect of divinity. He announced importantly by signs that he had prepared dinner—an excellent dinner. Edith shook her head.

"Dono-van Khan," she ordered. "Find him. Bring him here."

The servant hesitated, pretending that he did not understand. But Edith knew better, and waved him away on his mission. Experience had taught Aravang the advisability of obeying her; nevertheless, he went slowly.

Meanwhile, Edith bethought her that her hair would need a flower to set it off. She had made her toilette as anxiously as a débutante at a first dance. It was her wish that John Donovan should think her fair when he came to the house.

It was a poor kind of garden, after all, the roses thin and fast falling to the earth. Weeds overgrew the paths and the stone walls. Edith knew, however, where certain blue-grass flowers were still to be found. She sought for them in the swiftly gathering twilight that falls upon the valleys when the sun is obliterated behind the mountains.

Edith was stooping over a verdant tangle in a corner of the wall when she saw a tall, white-clad figure moving toward her. With her flowers firmly grasped, she rose and extended a hand, while her pulse quickened. She had not expected Donovan quite so soon. Then the blue blossoms fell at her feet and the hand dropped to her side.

The man was Monsey.

Edith watched, bewildered, as he hastened to her, stooping as he did so under the wall.

"Miss Rand," he said under his breath,

"I did not mean to startle you. We must be very quiet. We must leave at once." He was breathing heavily, as if he had been running, and a muscle twitched persistently in his cheek.

She faced him, surprised, trying to account for his appearance. Monsey had come from the direction of the small gate through which she had passed to the mosque. She saw him glance toward it anxiously.

"I have been watching you through glasses all this afternoon. Yes, Miss Rand—from the hill behind the hut. Now, it is our chance. The native guard in the ravine behind the mosque has been slain, but the devils are thick on the mountain-sides—"

Edith would have given much to read his face. Monsey's coming had at first filled her with expectation. Had aid from Kashmir reached Yahka Arik?

"Your father sent me." The man spoke impatiently. "I have risked much to come here to-night. Do not wait to get any other clothing. I have horses and men up the mountain. We came through—from the entrance ravine along a goat path."

He did not tell her of hours spent spying from the heights upon Yahka Arik, or of several Sarts in his pay slain that day as he tried to penetrate the concealed ravine through which he had once entered the valley—or of the fear that clung to him, close as his own shadow.

"My father? Is he here?"

Monsey swore under his breath and leaned nearer.

"No! He is sick. Come! You do not understand. We must go, or these devils will see us, and that will be the end of us all. *Nom d'un nom!*"

Edith strove to think, to decide. She had no reason to doubt that Arthur Rand had sent the Russian. The man's presence in the garden, which must be decidedly dangerous to him, was evidence to back his words. Likewise, Donovan had not yet had time to warn her of his pledge that she would not leave Yahka Arik without the consent of the Sayak chiefs. It was something in Monsey's manner that made her pause—and another thought.

"I have a friend," she said quickly. "He should be here any minute: I will not leave without him."

"A friend!" Monsey hissed angrily. "Some native! Have I come here to risk my neck for any one but you? The valley is guarded—"

Like a clarion from the skies, the long trumpet blast of Yahka Arik devastated the twilight quiet. Monsey started, and caught the girl's wrist.

"You hear? Ah!" He fancied that he saw a movement on the terrace overlooking the garden. You must come before the guard is changed—now—do you hear?"

"Let me think." Edith was trying to grasp the situation. Reason told her that John Donovan, alone, would find it easier to win free from Yahka Arik than if burdened with her. Because they trusted him, the Sayaks obeyed him. But the girl found that she did not want to leave the valley without John Donovan.

"No," she said. "I can't explain it all"—she was breathless with the urgent need of the situation—"Donovan Khan will soon be here. He will know. I must not do anything without him."

"A khan?" Monsey, intent on the balcony that was shrouded in gloom, caught only vaguely the name. "Edith, do you want them to catch me?" Under his breath he muttered: "Don't think, young lady, that I also am a folly."

He stepped nearer, his hand rising suddenly to her face. He had caught the silk shawl in his fingers. The girl, startled and suspicious, tried to draw away; but Monsey wrapped the shawl quickly about her head, holding it fast with an arm that he passed around her shoulders. The other arm caught her close to him, lifted her from the ground.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

—AND BROKEN.

"EXCELLENCY, the night was coming, and the garden was a place of shadows. Even so, for the trumpets had blown. An owl could have seen; I am not an owl. I did not see their faces, but only their

bodies. How was I to know? All unworthy, thou despisest me. Truly, my sorrow has gripped my flesh and what is within me—here."

Aravang was speaking in his own tongue. As he ended he smote his muscled chest with a knotted fist that made the hollow within his bones echo like a drum. Air escaped his bearded lips in a long, hissing breath.

Impatiently, Donovan moved. He was standing, feet planted wide, at the edge of the balcony overlooking the garden and the gray expanse that was the lake surface. Under impulse of a fresh breeze, the water's margin leaped against the stones.

"From the beginning," he said slowly. "Tell me what you did and what you saw. I do not blame you. But I must know."

Aravang squatted on his heels, facing the lake, struggling with the need of intelligent speech. Unlike Iskander, he was a man of few words and fewer ideas. While he talked, the white man bent nearer to catch each syllable of the tongue he did not know as well as others. His brain was afire with the need of action. Yet men who have commanded others in the armies of the world know the folly of action upon insufficient information.

"Excellency, I am thy *kul*. And for the white woman I would give the blood from my severed veins—aye. This is what came to pass, because of my folly. *Aie!* She sent me to seek thee. This I did not like, well knowing that thou and others of the *manaps* wert in council. I passed through the village, looking on all sides. An Usbek told me that the council had disbanded, and so I hastened back, thinking that thou wouldst be again at the stone house, and hungry."

"Straightway I went to the fire and the pots, and did the necessary things. Then to the balcony I came, seeking thee and *her*. Two I saw in the garden, but not the faces. One was a woman."

"Are you sure it was your mistress?"

Aravang grunted a disconsolate affirmative.

"Aye. Should I not know her poise, and the murmur of her voice, even from afar? The other I thought to be thee, for it was a

white man. Dog that I am, I waited, listening, and fearful to speak to the higher ones. Then she said thy name, Donovan Khan, very loudly. The white man made response, then took her in his arms. I was glad. I have known the longing that is in your veins for the white woman. Aye, I have seen the light of desire in her eyes—"

"Aravang!" Donovan felt ashamed, as he had been caught spying on the woman he loved. Then a hot exultation gripped him, to pass as swiftly as it came and leave him cold.

"Spit upon thy unworthy slave, master! Call me even a dog. Oh, I am unworthy! While I watched, this man took her in his arms and bore her to the small gate, the one that leads to the forest. The gate opened before him and then closed: this thing I heard."

The servant was breathing deeply, as a powerful man will who has run far.

"It was unwonted. Master, I knew thy custom to go always alone. If the gate closed, *thus*, when the white man held my mistress, another hand must have closed it. So, when I felt of the gate from within and found it fast, I scented evil. Then I climbed the wall. Donovan Khan, there is a small moon to-night. By its light I saw shadows moving into the forest. This, also, was a strange thing. I followed."

"You should have run for me." Donovan almost growled the words. "Go on with the tale."

"Verily I am a blundering *yak*. By the sound of their passage I traced the shadows through the trees. Several men spoke softly. By now I knew that an evil thing was coming to pass. After a long time, at one of the upper goat paths, I heard the *khanum* cry out, once. The cry was stifled. Am I not her dog? I ran forward to strike and slay, even though I held no weapon—not a knife. In the goat path, where the new moon struck through the trees, stood a dozen armed men with horses. They mounted and spurred away, two by two."

"Which way?"

"To the lower valley. The bits of the horses were muffled, likewise the hard leather of their hoofs. For a space I ran

behind, seeking to gain the side of my mistress. They saw me and went faster. Then the thought came to me that I should seek thee with the news. I waited until I knew they were riding beyond the valley and not to the mosque. Then I ran down the mountainside to the stone house, where you were sitting—"

Aravang ceased, and fell into expectant silence. The balcony was quiet, except for the native's deep breathing and the broken murmur of the lake. Now and then a gust shook the pine branches over their heads.

For five minutes John Donovan was immobile. In that time he experienced the bitterness that comes to a man with misfortune not of his deserving. He had longed for the moment when he could speak of his love to Edith Rand, and he had hurried to the house—too late. Also, with the necessary calmness of a trained soldier, he revised the whole plan he had formed with the Sayaks that afternoon, and made others. And, gravely, he prepared to face the consequence of a broken oath.

Edith Rand had left Yahka Arik.

His only information was the story of Aravang. Donovan could not know whether she had gone willingly or not. Yet he believed she had been taken forcibly.

"Aravang," he voiced the result of his thoughts, "run through the village to the mosque. Summon Iskander first, to come speedily here. Nay—bid all the Sayak leaders and Mahmoud to come. Say that I must speak with them. Go swiftly!"

"Excellency, I hear." The servant rose and dropped from the rail of the balcony to the earth. Donovan heard the sound of his words trail off: "It shall be done. I am a dog, but a dog can run."

He went below to the empty sleeping-room. Aravang had set the table, with lighted candles that flickered in the passing breaths of wind. The sight of Edith's empty chair stirred Donovan strangely, and he moved it away from the table.

Without being hungry, he forced himself to eat a certain amount of the spiced mutton and sour bread, washed down with fermented milk. This he did mechanically, and pushed his chair away from the table, fingering the bowl of his cold pipe.

The room was chilly, in spite of the embers of the fire Aravang had kindled in the grate. When the curtains that screened Edith's quarters swayed, Donovan could see the dressing-shelf the girl had fashioned laboriously—the mirror fixed in a chink in the stone, the silk-covered board bearing comb and pins, sewing materials, and various little jars of rosewater. He did not look up when Iskander strode in, swaggering and fully armed. When the Arab saw that Donovan would not speak, he glanced curiously at Edith's empty chair.

Others of the Sayaks came, among them the chief, and finally Mahmoud. Each one looked at him fleetingly, then knelt on cushions or against the wall, adjusting striped silk robes, and thrusting their hands into the wide sleeves.

Still, Donovan did not speak. Iskander, who alone had remained standing, his sharp, handsome face shadowed by the enveloping brown cotton hood, went to the partition that concealed Edith's bed and glanced within, hesitantly. The other Sayaks watched silently.

The Arab apparently studied something that interested him; then he faced Donovan.

"You have summoned us and we are here. The council of Sayak chieftains waits until you speak."

Donovan leaned back in his chair, and his glance went from face to face along the wall—dark faces, keen of eye, that did not turn from his scrutiny. His lips moved wordlessly as he murmured to himself: "Isn't it just my bally luck? Every minute we lose, before going after Edith is worth—well, there's no price high enough. But I can't act, I can't think of acting until I've made a clean breast to these chaps who trust me now as they always have, but their natures won't let them keep from suspecting me if I tell them Edith's gone. Iskander, of course, will back me to a certain extent—no further. Won't do, now to strain his friendship or to bank on my word alone again."

His lined face was grave, his clear eyes purposeful; but he was tired, and his pulse throbbed heavily. John Donovan had worn a uniform once, and he had been entrusted

with a mission to the Himalayas such as fall to the lot of few men. He had been successful. Now Edith's departure jeopardized the fruits of years of work.

He had made a pledge to the Sayaks, and the pledge had been broken, through no fault of his. Would they understand? If they did not—

"Edith's gone," he repeated to himself, "to the Tower. After all, that's what matters. Isn't she worth more than all the rest?"

The certainty of his love returned fourfold, and unsettled his reasoning. He could only think of one thing—Edith was gone, and he must go after her, but was kept from doing that very thing. He straightened in his chair and spoke to Iskander:

"This is what I have to say, O *manaps*. Send a rider to the ravine behind the mosque, to learn what is to be seen there, where the guard stood. Let the rider report here what he has seen."

Before assenting or refusing, the Arab consulted the other Sayaks with a glance. One, a swaggering Afghan whose evil-smelling wool was belted with a priceless sword, rose and left the room.

From the road outside came a clatter of hoofs. Donovan was gazing thoughtfully into the fire. "The white woman has left Kakka Arik," he said.

The faces of the Sayaks remained impassive, but all eyes turned at once to him. Iskander, leaning against the wall, played with a gold necklace at his throat.

"You made a pledge," he responded softly.

"I have not broken it, Iskander—"

"Speak not in English," warned the Arab, "or these others will suspect and grow angry."

"Bear witness," Donovan slipped easily into Turki, "as to the truth of what I say—"

"If it be truth," broke in one harshly.

"A fool, out of an empty mind, questions wisdom, and a jackal yelps from a pack." Donovan fastened the surly speaker with his blue eye. "Have you not given me the rank of *manaps*? Have you known me to lie, or to speak merely that I might hear the sound of my voice?" The Sayak

who had interrupted him looked uncomfortable. "Bear witness, Sayaks," Donovan raised his low voice a little. "Was I not at the council since the shadows have changed—since noon? After that, you know that I came here, and that I summoned you directly. Is this not so?"

Silence answered him, and Donovan's lips tightened.

"In that time," he pointed out, "I could not have taken the white woman through the guards and returned. Aravang knows that I was here."

Mahmoud spoke mildly, without raising his eyes:

"The *kul* is low-born, Dono-van Khan: his word we will not hear. Because of our trust in you, because you have aided Yahka Arik, and because your word is the word of Dono-van Khan, we will listen. Tell now how the woman came to depart from Yahka Arik." He paused, weighing his words: "It is well that you have spoken thus. For we knew that the woman was free of our guards. A watcher on one of the cliffs saw her ride hence, among several, and with a shot he brought down a rider."

At this, the assembled Sayaks nodded, scanning the white man with curious eyes. Well for Donovan that he had taken the right course, and confessed that Edith was gone, because they had known the truth before he summoned them.

"Likewise," continued Mahmoud coldly, "We know that the friends of the woman are riding toward Yahka Arik in the ravines not far away. And news has come to our ears from Kashgar that the one who is called the Vulture has been sent here by the father of the woman, to seek for her."

Donovan studied this, not revealing how much the words puzzled him. Mahmoud had an uncanny way of being aware of all that went on in the near-by hills. And the Sayaks had grown accustomed to thinking that Dono-van Khan knew everything.

"She did not leave the valley with her friends," he said slowly, "nor is the Vulture her friend."

"Yet," murmured Mahmoud, "it is in my mind that the Vulture has taken her with him, for who but he knows the ravines around Yahka Arik whither he once struck,

sinking his talons into the hearts of our fathers and husbands—"

"Aye," cried another, "he bore off our women!"

"Peace!" cried Iskander harshly. "Who should know that better than I—a father and a husband? Fools! Will you not heed the voice of him who is Dono-van Khan?"

The murmurs subsided, and the warriors settled back passively, only their dark eyes moving, following every motion of the white man. Outwardly, Donovan was quiet; inwardly his thoughts were racing. Who were the friends of Edith Rand that were nearing Yahka Arik? Monsey, called the Vulture by the Sayaks? Perhaps. Yet he thought not. Had Monsey actually been sent by Arthur Rand to bring Edith back to Kashmir? Donovan, knowing Monsey, doubted it.

He had made up his mind that Edith had not departed willingly from the valley. He felt that she would not depart without him. On this hope he based his next words, casting at a single throw the weight of his influence against the uncertainty and suspicion of the Sayaks.

"Men of the council, when the Arghan *mullahs* and the Turks came to you three years ago and would have inscribed your names and those of the tribes of Central Asia in their ranks, to fight in the great war against the English, what was my advice to you?"

"That we should not make war."

(Although Donovan barely spoke of it, his power among the hill tribes, and the Sayaks, had held back a weapon from the hand of the Turk, and more than once a resident of Kashmir had mentioned to British India that a man who could not be found had aided them in this way. And even a worthy member of Parliament in London had made a long speech declaring that the man—who had once been an officer—should be found and rewarded. But he was not found, although Fraser-Carnie had his suspicions, because John Donovan still occupied himself in the hills).

"And before then," he went on quietly, forcing himself to reason with them even while he was barely able to restrain his own impatience to follow the girl he loved,

"when the Russians despoiled the villages of the hills I saw something that I have not forgotten—a Russian officer, dismissed from rank because of his intrigues, and an Alaman merchant, with their followers took the pick of the women from the hill villages and sold them in the bazaars or the Cossack posts."

"Yet," said Iskander sternly, "those who were most desirable among the captured women these two men took to their own lusts. I know—Oh, I have known."

Just a little, at this, every Sayak in the room straightened, and complete silence fell. John Donovan rose and stood before the fire, squaring his shoulders. And he spoke calmly of how he had traced the slave merchants from Yahka Arik to Khokand, from there to Samarkand and as far as the Caucasus, then after a long year, back to Khokand. More than once he had fought them, with the aid of warriors of the despoiled villages. But when the pursuit had become too hot, the merchant had gone into hiding and the officer had disappeared.

"Some said he had gone to America, beyond the great ocean; others that he was yet in the hills—"

"He is here. We have heard!" Eagerly the Sayaks had followed his words, and now they gave tongue impetuously. "The merchant, Abbas Abad, has been seen in Kashgar, and the officer who is called the Vulture—"

Donovan stilled the rising tumult with upraised hand. He wheeled to the door, where he had seen the Afghan messenger appear, a moment ago.

"Speak!" he commanded the man. "What have you seen?"

"Dono-van Khan," the Afghan growled, "the guard in the upper ravine was slain, and riders were seen passing thereby, going toward the Tower."

Iskander caught at his sword, and the other Sayaks turned to Donovan.

"You know who the riders are!" cried Mahmoud. "You know that they shed Sayak blood to aid the white woman to escape—"

"Nay," Donovan faced the *hakim*. "O Mahmoud, where is your wisdom? Have you not seen that I loved the woman and

that she was to be my wife? She did not ride willingly from the valley. Even as your women were taken, she has been borne off by the man who is called the Vulture, who desires her for himself. And it is true that I know his name."

While the Sayaks waited he turned to Iskander.

"Son of Tahir, the Vulture is Monsey, who was once a Russian officer, and who now rides to the Tower."

The Arab started: then he bared white teeth in a grim smile. He drew his scimitar and jerked the scabbard from his girdle, casting it into the fire. "It was written!" he cried softly. "Oh, it was written, and now fulfilment shall come to pass."

A murmur that was like a growl answered him, coming from the lips of the warriors. "A-a-h!" the powerful chief stretched massive arms. "That is good hearing. And the Alaman dog will be with his master; Come!"

"Wait!" Donovan's clenched fist struck the table-top. "Do you believe what I have said, or do you still doubt?"

As one man the Sayaks answered:

"We believe. We have never doubted."

Donovan did not smile. Half an hour ago these same men would have slain him, if their suspicions had not been dispelled: now the personality of the white man had won them to him, as had often happened in the past.

"Good! Then what will you do?"

"Every Sayak who can bear a sword will mount and ride to the Tower, and the swords will not be sheathed until—"

"But who will lead? Monsey is shrewd, and his men are well armed. Who is your leader?"

They pointed to the Arab. "In warfare, the son of Tahir is our leader."

"It is well. Yet, is not my rank equal with his?"

The dark faces stared, one into another, and muscular hands fingered beards. Iskander coughed and spat: "Dono-van Khan, no hand but mine will tear out the throat of Monsey, if Allah so wills."

"Again, it is well, son of Tahir. Yet, am I—who rank with you—to go unescorted? Or without voice of authority?"

"Equal with mine shall be your authority, and men will follow your voice in battle. I promise it."

Donovan held out his hand. The other took it, being accustomed to this manifestation of friendship on the part of white men. The Sayaks passed out, but Donovan retained his grasp on the Arab until they had gone from the room.

"Another thing I ask," he said quietly. "You know that I mean to make Miss Rand my wife. She must be protected. There will be fighting and much trouble, because Monsey and Abbas are sellers of slaves—and they have no honor. I ask this of you: Give me a chance to get the American woman safely away from the Tower."

The Arab considered.

"You are my friend, Donovan Khan. What I may do, I will. But the Sayaks ride upon a quest. She is but a woman. Allah alone knows what may come to pass."

Donovan let the other's hand drop with a nod. They walked out together. In the path by the lake shore the Arab halted with a warning gesture. He could hear footsteps following them. A shadowy figure, bulky and clumsy, was outlined against the silvery-gray glimmer of the lake.

"Aravang," said Donovan.

Throughout the next hour the servant of Edith Rand dogged the heels of John Donovan, not letting the Englishman from his sight. His broad, good-natured face wore a harassed look, and from time to time he muttered to himself uneasily. When the white man mounted one of the Sayak horses, Aravang promptly laid hold of the stirrup, and trotted silently beside the horse.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VULTURE'S NEST.

TASH-KURGAN, so called by the tribes of Central Asia, had been erected out of the mountain rock by an imperial general of the Dragon Throne, to guard the gorge and the caravan track along the opposite cliff against the Tartar foes. This general and his staff, with his foes were dust in the valleys and gray bones in forgotten tombs

long before Tamerlane, the Lame Conquerer, led his armies across the mountains which had repelled so many invasions.

So, the *kurgan* resembled roughly a medieval stronghold. It was placed almost at the brink of the cliff that led down into the valley with its steaming rivulet. Its only entrance, consisting of a narrow flight of stone steps running diagonally up the wall, was on the western side, away from the ravine. Around it ran a ditch, once a moat, but now half-filled with pulverized sandstone and debris.

The sandstone walls with their crenellated tops were much worn by the age-old impact of heavy rains and snows. In place the stones had cascaded into the moat. The wall itself was some dozen feet high and a yard in thickness. Within, extensive as a drill ground, appeared a courtyard of beaten, level clay. Rude stone shelters, roofless for the most part, were built against the inner ramparts.

Only at one end was there a solid sandstone structure resembling, except for height, the keep of a medieval castle. In one corner of it rose the square tower, much broader at the base than the summit—after the fashion of the Tibetan lamaseries. Once a pagoda roof of sturdy cedar logs had surmounted the tower-top. Now this had fallen in.

The *kurgan* was very much like a bird's nest of many years ago.

In one of the chambers of the hold itself Edith Rand had been placed. It was walled with teakwood that did not entirely keep out the drafts of cold air that swept the *kurgan*. But a kerosene-stove gave out an odorous heat, and heavy Kirghiz carpets had been placed over the gaps in the teakwood.

Candle lamps, hung from the beams, illumined a hasty attempt to make the chamber habitable—a mattress and disordered blankets in one corner, saddle-bags with their contents of cooking utensils and clothing piled in the center of the uneven flooring that was littered with dust and ashes of former fires. In another corner Edith noticed a heap of moldy boots, some rusted tin lamps, and bits of military gear grouped around a smashed samovar.

These, and the carpets, were the only relics of Russian occupancy that had been left by stray plunderers.

"Not much of a boudoir, my lady," Monsey had assured her, "but then we will not be here long. I hope to make you more comfortable."

Edith had not answered. The room was Monsey's, and she compared it without knowing just why she did so with the neatness of Donovan's quarters. She was oppressed by the aspect of the teakwood room. Monsey had been busied for some time in discussion with Abbas Abad, who gazed with curious appraisal at the girl and smiled widely when she met his stare. She could not understand what they said.

The ride from Yahka Arik had taken long, involving as it did the crossing of the ravine, the climb and descent of numerous heights, and the passage through a forest where the girl wondered how her captors could find their way, not knowing that they had familiarized themselves carefully with the lay of the countryside.

Above the low voices of the men she could hear the stamp of horses near by, the crackle of a fire, and an occasional footfall. Not until Abbas Abad had departed—and Edith recognized in him, without especial surprise, the leader of the men in the Kashgar *serai*—did Monsey fling off his belt with its holster and revolver and speak to her, seating himself on an upturned packing-case, and drawing another forward for her. She remained standing.

"Still haughty, my lady? Ah, you do not know the pains I have taken to save you from the devils of Yahka Arik. Well, I apologize for using you roughly in what you Americans call the getaway. It was necessary. You are quite strong."

His glance went over her, and Edith turned her head away. Monsey leaned back comfortably, stroking his black, drooping mustache idly. He was well pleased with himself, but he was curious as to what the girl thought of him.

"You remember the dance at Srinagar, Edith—the one you—ah—refused me? You see, it would have been much better to have gone with me than that Rawul Singh. But you did not trust me. Do you now?"

"No."

"That is too bad. Why?"

Edith met his gaze with her honest gray eyes; and Monsey looked away.

"I don't know."

Surprised at this unexpected retort, Monsey's brows went up. Other women had found it good policy to please him. This American, wrapped in her pride, was like an icicle, he thought. Well, he liked her all the better for it.

It would be a pleasant sensation to master her pride. Monsey did not doubt his ability to do it. He did not mean to allow Edith to return to her father for some time. Money payment, even a large one, seemed a small thing when he had the woman herself near him. Life itself had ceased to bore him—and recently there had been certain fears, certain unrest. Abbas Abad had said that he was a marked man in these hills. Monsey had taken to using the Alaman's drugs, and this had not helped jaded nerves.

"You fear me, my handsome lady?"

"No."

There was no doubting the sincerity in Edith's low voice. To tell the truth she disliked and suspected the former Russian officer partly because he was associated with Abbas Abad, partly because he had put aside her own will in bringing her from Yahka Arik, but more because of her own intuition. She read the insincerity in his assertion that he was acting for Arthur Rand.

Monsey's narrow mind, self-centered and suspicious, sought for other reasons. He had the patient, consuming desire for the girl that masters all other impulse in a man of his type.

"Let me see. You spoke of a friend in Yahka Arik—a khan, was it not? So, you stoop to a native's—friendship—"

His calculating words accomplished their purpose. Edith flamed into swift retort, forgetting all caution.

"Dono-van Khan is a white man, and I found him very much of a gentleman. He will follow you. Oh, I hope—"

She broke off at a strange light in the man's amber eyes.

"Dono-van Khan? Donovan. By all the images of the church! Not Captain

John Campbell Donovan?" His hard eyes read her easily. "Captain Donovan—in Yahka Arik, alive."

For a moment he considered this, intently. Then he laughed.

"Why, it is fate itself, my beautiful lady. No, not that. It is my luck, my good luck. So, you found a lover waiting in that Sayak pest-hole?"

Edith had mastered her impulse of anger as quickly as it came. She wrapped her arms in the end of the shawl seating herself on the box, her back to Monsey.

"A beggarly Englishman, with a brown beard, if he has not shaved it? Yes, that is Donovan, the adventurer who has allied himself with the outlaw tribes, and without doubt, shares in the spoils of their brigandage—since they have made him a chief—"

"I don't believe you."

"Then you will see for yourself." He surveyed her, somewhat uncertainly, for he saw that the girl had changed greatly since Srinagar. "Look here, Edith: you should not quarrel with me. I came because Arthur Rand sent me. I have made that known in Kashgar, and the Sayak spies have carried the news to their murderer's nest. By now Donovan will have guessed that you are with me. And you will see how he conducts himself against the agent of your father."

Edith shook her head mutely, her faith in Donovan still strong, but Monsey smiled.

"My luck holds. A few hours, and we will see the last act of this little play. I want you to be a witness."

Monsey had begun to pace the room. His brown face had been reddened by exposure to the sun; the lines of his jaw were obscure by fat; his heavy mustache fell over the corners of his mouth. The eyes, revealing a network of red veins and set too close together, were prone to wander. This was the only indication of the hasheesh he used.

His powerful figure swelled under the short black coat with its astrakan collar. He had grown stouter, more gross. His former careful politeness had altered to an overbearing intimacy. The mask had fallen now that he no longer needed a mask.

Monsey halted as Abbas stepped into

the room without knocking. When the two had spoken, briefly, he turned to Edith.

"Horsemen have been seen in the passes around here. I fancy the Sayaks mean to invade the privacy of my abode."

Edith did not reveal the quickened hope that his words aroused. She had learned by experience to judge the events that thronged into this new world. And she reasoned that Monsey expected this to happen. Otherwise, why was he not disturbed?

Presently, with a glance at Abbas, he went out, carrying the holster and belt with him. For some time he had not taken the drug that he now needed at regular intervals. Abbas came nearer at once and peered into the girl's face. He tried to take the shawl from her shoulders, but she would not let him.

"Missy *khanum*," the Alaman whispered in very bad English, "you come with me, sometime! Oh, yas, by God!" He pointed after Monsey. "Not him no. Me, I, Abbas Abad, Alaman, *kum dan!* I give you—your fadder, for verree small paying—yes."

Edith shook her head, somewhat wearily. Abbas stepped back as Monsey appeared silently in the door. The Russian surveyed him suspiciously. Abbas grinned widely as he saw the other's hand move toward the revolver in his belt.

"Excellency," he observed in Turki, "would you threaten your slave? Nay, it is not the part of wisdom. Besides, a thrown knife is swift—as you know."

"This is not your place."

"Ah. Yet I came here to sleep." He yawned and went to the mattress, upon which he flung his fat body with a grunt. Monsey scowled.

"Those are my blankets."

The Alaman closed his eyes. "And the hasheesh, my excellency? That is mine and not yours. If you need some, presently, I would not want to deny you. Nay, I must sleep now."

Soon he began to snore, with an open mouth. Edith noticed, however, that whenever there was a noise outside the teak-wood room Abbas ceased snoring. Monsey had seated himself near her and tried to take her hand.

"You are beautiful, Edith," he whispered. "You are worth a risk. Bah, what is risk, or danger? You do not believe I love you. Well, you will see what I will risk for you. I tell you, there will be dead men lying about Yahka Arik, on your account. And you will know how powerful I am."

The girl had met his hot gaze steadily. Her scorn only served to inflame his fancy the more, and, perceiving the verdict of her anger, he dropped the now useless pretense of acting for Arthur Rand.

"I would not have you otherwise, Edith. When we leave Yahka Arik, you will see the garden that I have prepared, near Kashgar. I am master there—"

Edith laughed, her nerves high-strung.

"Are you?" She pointed to Abbas. The Alaman had been studying them, one eye wide open. When Monsey turned, the man appeared to be as soundly asleep as before. "Major Fraser-Carnie said that slave merchant has you in his debt. You see, the major learned something about you, from Captain Donovan."

All at once she felt very lonely, very much in need of the Englishman's presence. Her life in the world of Yahka Arik had been built around him. She could not believe that he would desert her.

"Donovan?" Monsey swore under his breath. "We will attend to him."

The sudden set to his full lips left no

doubt of the sincerity of this remark, at least.

Time passed. One of the lamps went out. Abbas was snoring in earnest now. The chill that comes with the last hours of the night crept into the teakwood chamber. Monsey, the stimulus of the drug dose gone, paced the floor restlessly, pausing to fiddle with the reeking stove. Edith gave herself up to the inertia that comes with fatigue.

Quiet had settled upon the *kurgan*.

To Edith, this silence was redolent of maturing events. Out of this quiet she felt that something would come to pass. Why had not Monsey tried to leave the castle while the coast was free? He must have expected to be followed. How was Abbas content to sleep when the Sayaks had appeared in the vicinity?

A glint of crimson light pierced one of the cracks in the walls. Edith's ears had been strained for a certain sound. Somewhere, beyond the mountains, the sun was rising, and she had not heard the familiar trumpet blast that resounded in Yahka Arik at dawn. Its absence was vaguely disturbing.

Unseen, she felt the presence of unknown forces mustering around her. This feeling was not premonition, or fear—it was certainty. The world of Yahka Arik had been disturbed. The trumpets were silent. Out of this silence something would come to the *kurgan*.

(To be concluded NEXT WEEK.)

NEVER AGAIN

I WILL sing with you, I will jest with you,
I will dance with you down the year;
But trudge a day on a weary way?
Never again, my dear.

I will feast with you when the lights flare high
And the hall is warm with cheer;
But share a crust in a garret's dust?
Never again, my dear.

For the gold of the heart is given once—
Yes, once, and but once, I fear;
And a true love slain comes back to reign
Never again, my dear!

Theodosia Garrison.

7 ARGOSY



His Own Funeral

by Mella Russell
McCallum

IN Paynetown a scrap of gossip was eagerly snapped up, and munched over and over, that no particle of flavor might escape. What wonder, then, that it was almost too much for mental digestion when Mort Greeves' wife ran away with the city fellow? The town buzzed and buzzed. The still-works, as they called the chemical plant, buzzed too.

Both Mort Greeves and the city fellow—whose name was Canfield—were employed at the still-works. Mort had operated one of the big stills for years. Canfield had blown in nonchalantly six months before, with impudent good looks and gaily colored silk socks. His quick wit had soon won him good pay. But his airs had never made him a favorite with the men.

The morning after the tragedy Mort appeared at his post as usual, only more grim, and oddly silent.

"He's been at the drink again," opined old Casper Judd, who washed stock-pots. "And a Greeves can't stand the drink. It makes a brute of a Greeves, does drink."

"Well, who's to blame him?" spoke up Mrs. Buttry, who cleaned young Payne's office every morning. "With Linda servin' him thataway?"

Caspar merely shrugged. But an acid voice took up the argument. "Trust a female to condemn her own sex! Mort had no call to lose Linda, not a mite." No one liked sour old Ed Zook very well, but he usually hit the nail on the head. "He could of kep' her easy enough, if he'd been a mind to. But he was peeved, on account

of gettin' stung with a gold-brick from that there mine agent, and bein' peeved, he set to drinkin' Saturday nights. An' you can guess what kind of a Sabbath Linda put in, after them Saturday night speers. For, like Caspar said, no Greeves can't stand drinkin'. He musta give the poor girl a swell time of it! But he was always smart enough to get sobered up by Monday, till now, so young Payne wouldn't catch on."

Mrs. Buttry persisted virtuously. "She took him for better 'r worse. She shoulda stuck, anyways."

"Fiddlesticks," commented Ed Zook. "I don't blame her. Only thing I'm afraid of, she'll find she's jumped from frying-pan into the fire."

"Ye-uh, that's what beats me," agreed Peter Wimple, the foreman, mildly. "What can a nice set-up girl like Linda see in that cigarette-lip, silk-sock dude—barrin' all thought o' right 'n' wrong?"

Suddenly the talk subsided. Young Payne made his usual crisp entrance, cool, well-groomed, curt. He gave his orders for the day to Wimple. And before he left he shot a frowning glance in Mort Greeves' direction.

Presently, before the talk began again, Mort Greeves was seen to leave his still in the far end of the room. Slowly he approached the group. There was an ominous something about him that made them catch their breath. "Cackle away, old hens," he said quietly. "Hash it all over good!"

Nothing more happened. But they all

agreed that there was danger ahead. They^a discussed their pros and cons more guardedly.

The next day was just the same. Only more tense. If anything, Mort was more grim, blacker of brow. His silence was positively menacing. Young Payne looked worried. He was short-handed, and Mort's was an important post, not easy to fill. Heads shook portentously.

The third day. No one could mistake Mort's condition now. He was obviously intoxicated at his still! Mouths gaped. It was just a question of time, now, before young Payne's wrath would fall.

Then, at ten o'clock, while they were all trembling over what young Payne would do, the door opened quietly and the city fellow stepped in. He wore his old insolent grin, and proceeded to unroll his overalls. He had come back to work!"

But, somehow, the moment passed, as moments do. Mort turned a sickly green, but did not move from his still. More tenseness.

Canfield swaggered up to Wimple for orders. Wimple hesitated. He knew how badly young Payne needed men. They were behind on their orders. He set Canfield to work.

And again the day went on. But there was very little talk now. They did not dare talk! God! Canfield back, and Mort drunk at his still! The directness of the prospect plumbed their imagination.

To tell the truth, no one was more surprised at Mort Greeves' quietude than Mort himself. He was not too drunk to wonder why he did not kill Canfield at once, and done with it. It would be so easy to make away with the puppy! Three running steps, and he could fling himself at Canfield's throat! With the clear part of his brain he measured out the distance many times that day. Canfield was puny. He was a giant. It would be so easy! Too easy, in fact. Maybe that was the reason he desisted.

But there was really another reason.

Although drunk, Mort was already the victim of remorse. He knew, in his added mind, that he had been a brute to Linda. He knew he had driven her to what she had

done. And he realized now, when it was too late, how much he cared for her. Why, her little finger was dearer to him than all the world besides. Therefore—it was fool's reasoning, of course, but how else can man reason with his veins full of cheap whisky? Therefore, he would begin his atonement by *not thwarting her now*. If she wanted Canfield, she should have him! "I ain't a goin' to start nothin'," he resolved doggedly. "I been mean enough to her a'ready."

That night he drank again, deeply, seeking relief from memory. But relief did not come. He kept thinking of how he had tracked mud through their pretty cottage, and had gone to bed with muddy boots on; of the mean things he had said; of how, once, he had struck her, and left a blue mark on her round, white arm. God! Couldn't a man drink enough to forget those things? It seemed not!

And all the time he never swerved from his strange resolve not to lay a finger on Canfield.

The fourth day. The city fellow began to whistle at his work. He even spoke—cautiously, it is true—of his "girl." He intimated that life was rosy for her now. No one replied.

That afternoon young Payne discharged Mort. "You know I don't employ drinking men, Greeves," he said coldly. "I've stood this longer than I should. Get your time at the office."

Mort nodded dully, and shut off the still. "You heard me?" snapped Payne.

"I'm goin'," muttered Mort.

But he did not go. Young Payne's attention was called away, and Mort still puttered around his still. Although he could not read the gage correctly now, he hated to leave it.

An hour before closing time Wimple told Canfield to clean out a drum, in preparation for the morrow. The drum had recently held a chemical which gave off an explosive gas. It was very hard to make out through the bung-hole whether it was thoroughly clean or not. Canfield drew a match from his pocket. Old Caspar saw the act. Stop, you fool!" he shouted.

Wimple did his duty. He made a dash

for Canfield, and tried to knock the match down. But the city man sprang away like a cat. "Aw, hell!" he sneered. "You babies make me sick!" And before any one could interfere again, he struck the match.

No one took any chances now. Wimple, Zook, old Caspar, all deadly pale, fled in wild haste. They knew what would happen.

Mort Greeves knew, too, but he did not move. He was feeling dully sorrowful about his dismissal. He loved the big, thundering still that he had tended so long and well. He patted it sentimentally, and a tear rolled down his cheek. There was just one consolation about being fired, he considered; he would now be free to drink all the time. And surely, surely, if one drank all the time, all the liquor in the world, one could find forgetfulness!

Nonchalantly Canfield held the match to the bung-hole, and peered in. Mort watched him in a detached sort of way. Then—

The explosion!

Mort was flung into a corner. He heard Canfield shriek, "God! My eyes!" At once flames broke out. Stock-pots of inflammables are excellent food for flames. Blinking, Mort watched the scene. He was becoming sober by leaps and jumps. And he knew that he would presently be a dead man if he didn't do something and do it quickly. Already the smoke was stifling.

He sprang up and beat his fist against the flimsy office partition beside him. It gave way, and he gulped a great breath of air, and started headlong for safety.

Then Canfield screamed again: "I'm pinned in here! My God, I'm dying like a dog!"

Mort halted. Nature had made him brave and simple-minded. He had once rescued a boy from drowning, and a woman from being scalded. Moreover, instinct is the quickest thing on earth, whether it be the instinct of self-preservation or to save the life of another.

Afterward, however, Mort liked to believe that it was his resolution not to "start nothin'" that sent him back to get Canfield—although it can hardly be called "starting something" to decline to risk almost certain death! Anyway, whatever it

was, he faced the hades again, swiftly found Canfield, wrenched him free, picked him up.

But when he got back to the office it was all blazing. There was no escape!

He yelled like a mad bull, and carried Canfield over to a trap-door near his own still, and together they plunged down into a small, unlighted cellar. Still acting by instinct, he laid Canfield down gently.

"Why don't you kill me, and done with it?" whimpered Canfield. "You've got me where you want me, ain't you? My eyes is gone, and my leg's 'most cut in two—I shan't fight back."

"Shut up!" growled Mort. "We'll both get oorn quick enough, when the stills fall through!" Then he muttered to himself the formula which had guided him the past two days: "I ain't a goin' to start nothin', 'cause she loves him!"

He sat down, hugging his knees, waiting.

Eleventh hour repentance came over Canfield. "I done you a dirty trick," he moaned.

Mort turned fiercely. In the darkness his fingers sought and found Canfield's thin neck. He let them rest upon it musingly. Why not? Canfield ought to die.

Canfield was gasping, and calling monotonously upon the Deity.

Suddenly Mort withdrew his hand. "I ain't a goin' to start nothin'," he said aloud.

"I—gotta—tell you—somethin'." Canfield's voice was faint. "You—oughta know that"—Mort bent forward to hear—"that she—she left—"

The sentence was not finished. There was a crash, a cave-in. Something heavy fell across Mort's legs, numbing them. His hands were free, however, and he felt about. A huge object lay where Canfield had been. He recognized it as his own still. And Canfield—was under it.

But even in the fresh horror he wondered about that unfinished sentence. What was it Linda had left? That seemed more important than all the havoc. He was acutely resentful because the still had not waited a few seconds longer before snuffing out Canfield's life.

A piece of iron rolled down on his arm, imprisoning it securely. But after a time

he managed to free himself by wriggling out of his coat. The crackling above continued. Gradually, by some fresh arrangement of debris, the weight was lifted from his legs. And now the pain was terrific.

What was it Linda had left?

He fainted.

It was night when he came to. The crackling had ceased. Water, blessed water, was trickling into his face. He heard voices, but he could not muster a sound from his own throat.

"Greeves! Mort Greeves! Canfield!" they called.

If only some of that water would trickle into his mouth, maybe he could answer. He tried to cup some of it in his hands. He was too weak. A voice—Wimple's—said solemnly: "Well, boys, they're gone, I guess!" Women were there, too! He caught the thin treble of their voices. Maybe Linda—looking for Canfield!

Then some one said: "We might as well go home. We can't help the poor lads none!"

Every thing grew still. Their footsteps soon died away up the dirt road. He lay, half fainting, for a long time. A very little strength came to his limbs. With great exertion he began to crawl about. He found that he was literally in a cage, made of broken machinery and debris. Safe enough, as long as he kept quiet. But the least jar might bring some great weight down upon him—as his still had tumbled on Canfield. He perspired coldly at the thought.

What was it Linda had left?

Again he fainted. It seemed a long time afterward when he awoke again, and remembered his cage. But it was still night. "Good God, I can't crawl round in a circle forever!" he thought, and pulled recklessly at a heat-distorted pipe. To his surprise nothing disastrous happened. He pulled some more, working like mad.

Ah! He was free! Under the stars! Breathing sweet air! He went down in a heap. But soon he began to crawl again. He tried to get up and walk, but that was impossible. He could only crawl a few feet at a time. But he kept on.

At dawn he found himself in the woods

near the still-works. Trees, clean and cool, lulled him with soft sounds. Moss and grass invited his wracked frame. He tried to call, but his voice was still gone. He tried to think, to plan. Too hard. There was a little brook there, and he dipped his hands into it, sucking the water eagerly.

Then he slept. Real slumber.

At dusk he awoke, with a half-scream. Rest had restored his voice. He could think, now, too. But that was no comfort, for all he could think of was: "Linda—Linda!" He beat the ground with his fist, crazily. If only he, and not Canfield, had perished! For she wanted Canfield!

He took a long draught of water, and started to crawl again. He tried to formulate a plan, to have a definite object. But that was still too exhausting. So he just kept on, crawling, resting, dozing, all through the night. At length he came out of the woods, and painfully made his way across a road.

Then, after a sleeping spell that must have been longer than usual, blinding sunlight smote him squarely in the eyes, through an opening in some shrubbery. He looked about curiously. He was lying close beside a white building, effectively screened by thick shrubbery. A fugitive could not have found a better place. He was no fugitive, but he was thankful that there were no curious eyes to behold his weakness.

What was this white building, anyhow? It couldn't be a farmhouse, for no one moved about in it. And the schoolhouse was red brick.

Why, it was the church! Of course. Strange—and funny, too. He and Linda had been married here.

Musing unhappily, he fell asleep again. This time a pleasing sound awakened him. Singing. In the church. A hymn, too, "Must be Sunday," he muttered. He raised himself on one elbow. A string of buggies lined the roadside. And a slim blue automobile. That was queer. Young Payne never went to the church. But no one but young Payne had a slim blue car.

Merciful Heaven, there was the hearse! "Who's dead?" he muttered.

The hymn ended, and the voice of the old

preacher, the same that had married him, droned gently out the open window:

"Dear friends, I am called upon this day to perform a sad duty. Two of our brethren have departed the vale. You all know the tragic fate of George Canfield and Morton Greeves."

Mort began to tremble violently. His own funeral! "Have they got me in a box, for sure?" he wondered.

He crept along until he was under the window. Then, by terrible effort, he raised himself upright. There was a thick vine over the window, so no one could see him, but he made out the interior clearly. There were a lot of people. And there were two coffins.

"They have got me!" Mort whispered. "I musta went along with Canfield!" He never doubted it. Nor did it seem so very strange.

Leisurely, the elder launched into his sermon. "Of our brother, George Canfield, I know but little. It is neither my desire nor my duty to go into that little."

"He means about Linda," thought Mort.

"Let us, therefore, not judge him. Let us, with charity in our hearts, consign him to the Almighty Judge."

"But our other brother, Morton Greeves, was well known to us all, and well beloved." The elder's voice shook.

Mort continued to stand, clinging to the sill. It seemed, somehow, vaguely worth while to stand at one's own funeral. He watched the scene with interest. There was Mrs. Buttry. There was Peter Wimple and Caspar Judd. All crying. And, yes, sir, there was Ed Zook crying, too! Mort had no near relatives, but there were rows and rows of neighbors. And young Payne, aloof and elegant, and strangely haggard.

Linda was not there. He was glad of that.

"Friends, this is a mighty hard funeral sermon to preach." The old minister smiled his sweet, wise smile. The audience stirred understandingly. "But I have come to the conclusion that there is no use winking at facts. I could stand here and sing only praises of Morton Greeves. But the last months of his life were not deserving of praises."

Mort's jaw sagged in astonishment. He had been in a sort of detached sympathy with the tears and the sadness. But this plain talk—was it usual at funerals, he wondered? He didn't like it.

"Up to six months ago our brother was a fine young man. A loving husband, a good neighbor, a loyal citizen. He was thrifty and ambitious. He was respected. His home was a happy home."

"What, then, changed this respected young man? What brutalized his fine young manhood? Disappointment, friends! Disappointment over the loss of a few paltry hundred dollars."

"Huh!" muttered Mort. "The parson never saw a hundred dollars all to once in his life!"

"Six months ago Morton Greeves was defrauded of his savings. It was a blow, a hard blow. But it was a test sent by the Lord. And did he stand up under the test? No. He broke down like a child over a broken toy. And he turned to the one thing no member of his family could ever touch with safety. Drink. You know the rest, friends. And all because he could not meet a petty trial like a man."

"Petty trial—losin' all that money?" thought Mort indignantly.

The preacher went on, after his lights. "And at length Mort also was consigned to the Almighty." "Gosh," muttered Mort, "if that there Almighty Judge hands it out any plainer, I dunno what 'll become of me!" There was a prayer, another hymn, and the procession filed out.

Mort sank down. "I wonder, *have* they got me in that box?" He honestly did not know. He seemed to be alive. He ached as if he were alive. The pain in his legs was very much alive. But so much had happened lately, he couldn't be sure. He watched the procession move up to the cemetery, a few rods distant.

Suddenly a fit of rage possessed him. "Hell of a lot the parson knows!" he said savagely. "If I am alive, and ever get on my legs again, I'm goin' to drink, 'n' drink till the stuffs all gone! Ambitious, thrifty, lovin' husband—hell!"

He did not know he was making his last resistance to the preacher's indictment.

The prolonged effort of standing had used up his small store of strength. He lay down exhausted, his anger spent, and watched the burial. There was a sneer on his lips. But in his heart he was not sneering. In his heart he felt solemn. Then he slept.

It was evening when he opened his eyes. A sound, a terrible sound, came to him. Sobbing, dry and wracking. His first thought was: "Ain't the funeral done yet?" Then it occurred to him that nothing about the funeral had been so terrible as this sobbing. It tore at his heart. What could it be? It seemed to come from the cemetery.

Then suddenly he knew, and closed his eyes. "She's—grievin'—for him!"

"Darlin'!" Linda's agonized voice came through the shadows. "Mort—darlin'!"

He started. She had said "Mort."

"Mort—forgive—"

"Linda!" It was a feeble cry. But it brought her.

She did not seem greatly surprised to find him there. Perhaps she, too, had gone through waters too deep to allow of a small thing like surprise. She leaned over him tenderly, held his blackened head against her breast. "Oh, God," she whispered awesomely. And she carried him, in her strong young arms—he had lost weight amazingly—across the meadow to their cottage.

Dawn found Mort bathed, between clean sheets, almost content physically. He watched Linda as she worked about the room. How pretty she was, how tender her movements. How he loved her. If only—she hadn't gone away! If only, for he tried to be just, he had not driven her away! How happy they might be—if only—

She smiled to see him awake. But she did not quite meet his eyes. "You feelin' better?" she asked in an anxiously low voice.

"Heaps."

They fell silent again.

"Say, who was in that there box?" he demanded suddenly. "I don't guess it was me, after all!"

"Oh, that!" She seemed to welcome any

distraction from the main issue. "Why, you see, they couldn't find hide nor hide o' you, 'ceptin' your coat. So they thought as how you must be either all burned up or blowed up." She shivered. "'N' it didn't seem right to be givin'—givin' him Christian burial 'n' not you, so they thought as how they'd bury your coat, anyways. It seems kinda funny now, don't it?" There was a hysterical and tremulous note in her utterance.

Mort laughed a little, weakly. "It is sorta funny," he said. Linda continued to busy herself about the room.

"Young Payne's goin' to build up again," she said presently. "Granny Peebles heard so in town yesterday. You'll get your place back." Still she did not look at him.

Mort did not reply.

"God, girl!" he burst out at last. "Look at me!"

She faced him, breathing fast. "You don't mean—you're carin'—after—" she whispered.

"Carin'! Come here, girl!"

She flew to him, flung herself down beside his pillow, held him close. "Oh, thank God, I can tell you now!" she said, crying for joy. "Now I know you care, even thinking—that I—"

"Hush, Linda! Never speak of it!"

"But I must! I gotta tell you—that I—I left him 'fore we ever got to the station. I been up to Granny Peebles all the time, Mort. It was like him to pertend I went along!"

Mort was piecing fragments. He understood now what Canfield had tried to tell him. A sense of peace and happiness came over him. Chastened, steady happiness. He knew that he should not swerve when the next test came.

The warm forenoon sunshine splashed the neat chamber brightly. It warmed their sober, thoughtful faces. It warmed the pink roses on the wall. It warmed Linda's round, white arm that hovered near him on the coverlet—the arm with the blue mark, now fast fading, thank God!

"I won't say it ain't spooky, attendin' your own funeral, but it's the best thing ever happened to me," said Mort.

Linda nodded, smiling.

Serapion

by Francis Stevens

Author of "Citadel of Fear," "Claimed," "Avalon," etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

SO LIKE HIM!

AROUND 2 P.M. I was taken before Magistrate Patterson and my bail set in the sum of thirty-five hundred dollars. Arthur Terne, second vice-president of the Colossus Trust Company, having appeared as my bondsman, the matter of my liberty pending the inquest, to be held the following morning, was soon arranged.

I left the court in Mr. Terne's company. Nils Berquist I had not seen, but was given to understand that he had been remanded without bail. I had pleaded in vain for a chance to talk with him.

Mr. Terne was kindness personified, though I inferred from one or two remarks he let fall that the Colossus' leonine president was not pleased.

The morning papers had featured the affair with blatant headlines. They had got my name. The Barbour & Hutchinson failure was resurrected.

The Colossus itself stalked in massive dignity across one column, irrelevantly capping a "Brutal Slaying in Haunted House," and when I saw that, I knew that "not pleased" was a mild description for Vansittart's probable emotions!

The bizarre character of Alicia, the nature of the wound, and the ghastly inappropriateness of the weapon which effected it, had appealed to the reportorial fancy with diversely picturesque results. A plain murder, with no more apparent mystery attached than this one, would have passed with slight attention. But though Alicia was not a professional medium, it appeared that she and Moore had a certain reputation.

In hinting to me of the latter's tempestuous exit from the Psychic Research Association, Nils had spared mentioning Alicia as the bone of contention. I now learned that she had been a country girl, the daughter of a hotel-keeper in a tiny Virginian village where Moore had spent two or three autumn weeks.

Discovering in her what he regarded as supernormal powers, he wished to bring her north for further study. On her father's strangely objecting to this treatment of his daughter as a specimen, Moore had settled the difficulty by offering marriage. After the wedding, he did bring her north, educated her, and finally presented her to the Association as a prodigy well worth their attention.

Unfortunately, after several remarkable seances, she was convicted of fraud in flagrant degree. It was through the slightly heated arguments ensuing that Moore was asked to resign his directorship.

The fantastic dispute had amused the lay-public intermittently through a dull summer, but I was off in the mountains that year with Van, and what news we read was mostly on the sporting pages, whither the pros and cons of spiritualistic debate are not wont to penetrate. But all that was raked up now, as sauce for the news of Moore's sensational death, and having acquired a certain personal interest in spiritualism, I read it.

Following Mr. Terne's advice and my own inclination, I went straight home. No need to rehearse all I endured that day. Roberta's smilingly tearful consolations were the worst, I think, though my father's: "Clay, son, you are right to stand by your friend!" ran a close second. He said it

This story began in *The Argosy* for June 19.

because I refused to hear a word against Nils, and insisted that the fault had not been his. Though I would not go into the details of what had taken place in Moore's library, I stuck at that one truth, and Dad, at least, who had taken a fancy to Nils the evening he dined at our house, believed me.

Altogether, however, it was a bad afternoon, and that night in my bedroom the face came again. I knew it was he, though the room was dark and I could not see him clearly. He had become so like as that to a material being!

"You have done well!" he began. "But, to make one small criticism, you must learn not to blush so easily. When your father commended your loyalty you reddened and stammered till, if you had not been among friends, suspicion might have been roused."

"My confusion only lasted a moment," I defended. Then I remembered. "You go!" I said. "What do I want of you and your criticisms or advice? You have brought me enough unhappiness. I am a sneak and a criminal, and all through you!"

"Ingratitude is the only real crime," he retorted sententiously. "Always be grateful, and show it! You have brought unhappiness on yourself, and it is I who point the way out. So far you have followed my advice. Why turn on me now?"

"Liar!" I fairly hissed. "If you can read my thoughts, you know that I have planned otherwise than you would have me! I am doing as Nils wished without regard to you, and not for the sake of myself. And let me tell you this! If there arises the slightest prospect that my friend will not be cleared, I shall confess. To-morrow will decide it. If things go badly for him at the inquest, my people will have to suffer. The shame and loss he is trying to save them from would be nothing, then, to the shame involved by silence!"

Had the face possessed shoulders, I know he would have shrugged them.

"You are wrong, but we need not discuss that. I tell you in advance that your friend will be held for wilful murder. Did you know quite all that I know, you would not hope for a different indictment."

The strings of my heart contracted. I passed a breathless moment of realization.

Then: "To-morrow I confess!" I said firmly.

"To-morrow you will choose a lawyer for your friend, and begin the work which will surely achieve his release."

"You do not know that! You have admitted that you are capable of mistakes."

"Not in a case of this kind. I possess a wide knowledge of facts which enables to be very sure that your friend will get his release. I am your unswerving ally. And remember that I have not only wisdom, but some power."

"Oh, you are—leave me!" I cried aloud.

"In God's name, go!"

The faintly-seen oval of his smooth face faded, though more slowly than in the cell at the station-house.

I heard a soft swish of slipped feet in the hall. Someone rapped lightly and opened my door.

"Clay, dear," said my mother, "did you call? Are you ill?"

"No. I had a bad dream and awoke crying out because of it."

"One can't wonder at that." She came and sat on the edge of my bed. "Such an awful thing for you to be involved in! Please, dear son, keep to your own class after this. Trouble always comes of mingling with queer Bohemian people who have no standards, or—or morals."

"Nils Berquist has the highest standard of any man I know!" I was fiercely defensive.

There was a pause of silence. Then in the dark she leaned and kissed my forehead. "You are so like him!" she murmured.

I groaned. "If only that were true!"

"But you are. With those blue, clear eyes of his, that saw only beauty and love. He would never hear a word against a friend."

"Mother! You meant that I am like—"

"Your uncle, yes. And in some strange way I feel sure that his guarding influence is really about us. Why, when I came into the room just now I had the queerest feeling—as if it were a room in a dream, or—no, I can't convey the feeling in words. But the sense of *his presence* was in it. I do truly believe that he has returned to

guard us in the midst of so much trouble. At least, it would be like him. Dear, faithful, loving, lovable Serapion!"

CHAPTER XV.

BAD DAYS.

BUT had my desired obsession, or familiar, or haunting ghost really desired to help, he might have warned me definitely of Sabina Cassel.

Alicia did not appear at the inquest. She was ill and under a physician's care. Her semi-conscious state as reported by him prevented even the taking of a deposition.

I did not, however, stand alone as star witness before the coroner's jury. Sabina Cassel, Mrs. Moore's old colored "Mammy" whom she had brought north with her from Virginia, shared and rather more than shared the honors with me.

They had taken pains that Nils and I should not meet. He was kept rigorously *incommunicado* till the inquest, no one, save the police and the district attorney, having access to him. At the inquest I caught only a glimpse of him, when he was led out past where I awaited my turn before the jury. Involuntarily I sprang up, only to be caught by a constable's hand, while Nils was hustled on out. As he went, he threw me a glance that was a burning, dictatorial command.

I obeyed it. I told the jury exactly that story which Nils's letter had outlined for us both. There was tempered steel in Berquist. I could be sure that no long-drawn torment of inquisition could make him vary a hairs-breadth from the line he had set for us to follow.

In my testimony, which preceded Sabina's, I explained what Nils had objected to my interest in spiritualism, fostered by a single previous visit to the Moores' place. That he wished me to leave the house with him, and that Alicia also had seemed set against my remaining. That an argument ensued, at the height of which Moore became very angry and excited, shouted: "I'll settle with you, once for all!" and came around the table toward Berquist.

"He grasped Berquist's arm," I said. "When my friend tried to free himself, Moore snatched the—the file from the table. I saw Berquist seize Moore's wrist. They struggled a moment, and then Moore staggered away with his hands to his face. Then—he fell down. Berquist called to me, and— No, I had not tried to interfere. It all happened too quickly. There wasn't time. After Berquist wrenched the file from Moore's hand I don't believe he struck at Moore. I think the file was driven into his eye by accident."

That surmise, of course, was struck from the record; but I had said it, at least, and hoped it impressed the jury.

"Afterward, the—the sight of blood and the suddenness of it all turned me sick—no, my recollections were clear up to that time."

And so forth. It was a straight story. I knew it agreed to a hair with Nils's confession.

What I did not, could not know, was that it varied in one essential detail from an entirely different confession—a confession made by a person whom we had not considered as an even possible eye-witness, and whose very existence I, at least, had forgotten.

Given that a second eye-witness existed, one would have supposed that the disagreement would have been over the slayer's identity. It was not. By a curious trick of fate, Sabina Cassel, Alicia's old colored maid, did undoubtedly see me strike Moore down, and yet, not through such a supernatural illusion as caused me to kill Moore, but in a perfectly natural manner, she had confused Berquist's identity with mine. She related as having been done by Berquist that which had been done by me.

In one detail only did Sabina's testimony conflict with ours, but that was the kind of detail which would hang a man, if its truth were established.

She had seen me—Berquist by her own account—snatch the file from the table and strike Moore, and she had seen me do it on no further provocation than the laying of Moore's hand on my arm.

The Fifth Presence was right when he foretold that Nils would be indicted.

And yet, though things had indeed gone ill for Nils at the inquest, I did not at once carry out my expressed intention and substitute myself for him as defendant.

I didn't wish to die, nor spend years in prison. I wanted to live and have a decent, straight, pleasant future ahead, such as I had been brought up to expect as a right. It seemed to me that just one way lay open. Though Nils was now entirely at my mercy, only his untrammelled acquittal would give me the moral freedom to keep silent. For that a first-class lawyer was a *sine qua non*.

Berquist was practically penniless, and the Barbour exchequer in not much better state. Here again, however, friendship came to the fore in a curiously impressive manner. For the sake of an old acquaintance and some ancient friendly claim that my father had on him, none other than Helidore Marx took Berquist's case. I mean Helidore Marx, of Marx, Marx & Orlow, who could have termed himself Marx, the famous and not lied.

I remember my first interview with him after dad had—to me almost incredibly—persuaded him into alliance. My first impression was of a mild-looking, smallish man, with a scrubby mustache. He had hurt the top of his bald head in some way, so that it was crossed with a fair-sized hillock of adhesive plaster. I thought that added to his insignificant appearance; but he had the brightest, softly brown eyes I have ever seen, and after the first few minutes I was afraid of him.

I was afraid that I would tell him too much.

My confidence, however, proved not the easily uprooted kind of a common criminal, and for Nils the acquisition of this famous, insignificant looking lawyer gave me the only real hope of assurance I had through those bad days.

"Your friend," Marx had said to me, "is a rather wonderful young man, Barbour. I can't blame you for being troubled. He has the kind of intelligence that would make a legal genius of him, if he had turned his efforts in that direction. A wonderful intelligence—and all lost in a maze of impractical theorizing and the sort

of dreams that can't come true so long as men are men, and women are women, God help us all! He shan't go to the chair, nor prison, either. He's my man, my case, and—yes, I'll say my friend, though I don't run to sudden enthusiasms. Leave Berquist to me!"

Evidently, Marx's consultations with his "case" had not been kept within strictly professional bounds. I smiled involuntarily. I could picture that long dark face of Nils lighting to alert interest as he discovered that Marx was not merely the lawyer who might save him from martyrdom, but also a thinking man. He must have brought out a side of the little man that was kept carefully submerged at ordinary times. I am sure that few people had seen Helidore Marx inclined to dilatory wanderings in philosophy, such as Nils loved.

But I went out with a lighter heart and more optimism than I had carried in some time. Marx, with his "my man, my case—my friend!" had instilled a confidence which remained with me all that day.

I had returned to the bank, for though I walked in the Valley of the Shadow, while I could walk I must work.

So Mr. Terne had me back again, and it was a very good thing that I had Mr. Terne to go back to. Not many men would have put up with the abstracted attention my work received, nor patiently picked up the slack of details I let go by me.

His patience had a characteristic reason behind it, which I was sure of from the minute he told me about poor Van.

The latter, it seemed, had really gone the step too far with his father in the affair of Mr. Terne's four hundred. Vansittart, Sr., would let no one speak of his son to him after that day. Everyone in the bank, however, knew that he had quarreled with him, disowned him, and that Van, in a fit of temper, had refused the offer of a last money settlement—a couple of thousand only, it was said—flung out of the Colossus, and walked off, leaving the gray roadster forlorn by the curb.

No one knew where Van had gone after that. He had simply vanished, saying no

good-bys, and taking nothing with him but the clothes he wore.

Mr. Terne felt guilty because it was his complaint which had caused the final rupture. He liked me, anyway, but having, as he believed, ruined Van he showed an added consideration for me which developed into an almost absurd tenderness for my feelings.

He needed that, if I was to be kept on the tracks at all those days. I was nervous as a cat, and ready to jump at the creak of a door.

Roberta would watch me with wide, troubled eyes, and because a question was in them I would grow irritable and fling off and leave her with almost brutal abruptness. And always she forgave me—till I came near wishing she would forgive less easily.

Cathy resented my new irritability with the merciless justice of a sister; mother endured my anxiety for Nils only because it proved I was like "dear Serapion," and dad harped on his pride in me for "standing by" till I really dreaded to go near him.

As for the Fifth Presence, he remained detestably faithful. Several times I explained to him that if Nils were not cleared I intended to confess. When he only continued to smile, I ceased talking to him.

He still came, however, and on the very night before the trial opened, the last thing of which I was conscious, dropping asleep, was his smooth, persuasive, hateful, silent voice. As ever, it was expressing the platinous—and always subtly evil—advice to which habit had so accustomed me that it had grown very hard indeed to distinguish his speech from my thoughts!

CHAPTER XVI.

SABINA'S TESTIMONY.

WHEN a murderer—for I named myself that—is called to confront across some thirty feet of court-room the innocent man standing trial in his stead, he needs all his nerve and a bit more to keep steady under the questioning of even a friendly and considerate counsel.

In fact, I was strangely more afraid of Marx than of District Attorney Clemens. I might, however, spared myself there.

The impanneling of the jury had been a battle-royal between Marx and Clemens, at which I was not present, but which had roused the newspaper men to gloating anticipation of the real battle to follow.

Then Marx—dropped out!

I could hardly believe it when Orlow, his junior associate, met me on the first day of the trial, and broke the news. It proved lamentably true.

By Orlow's account—he was a fat, clever little Russian, with an unmistakable nose and a tongue that would slip into betraying v's and p's—by his account Marx had finished with the talesmen against strict orders from his physician.

"A book hit his head," explained Orlow. "That was in September. It dropped off a shelf, and the brass corner cut his head—oh, just a *leetle* bit! But he was careless. Infection set in, and now there is necrosis of the bone in his skull. To think of it! With such prains inside! He will be operated now, and when I vent to see him this morning, he was insensible. And to think of it," he added with melancholy and unconscious humor, "it was the Compiled Statutes that may have ruined our Helidore Marx forever! Vell, we must just do as ve can without him."

This was poor consolation. Had it not been for Marx, I told myself, I would never have left Nils Berquist go to trial. Should I allow it to go on now, with our best hope *hors de combat*?

The second Marx—Helidore's brother—was in Europe, and Orlow, while brilliant in his fashion, was not a man to impress juries. His genius lay in the hunting out of technical refinements of law, ammunition, as it were, for the batteries which had brought rage to the heart of more than one district attorney.

When he arose presently in court and asked for a delay in proceedings, Clemens's eye lighted. When Mr. Justice Ballington refused the request—a foregone conclusion, because Marx, admittedly, was in too serious a condition for the delay even to be measured—Clemens lowered his head sud-

denly. It might have been grief for his adversaries misfortune—or, again, it might not.

Where I sat with other witnesses, I was intensely conscious of an absurd, brilliantly-veiled little figure, two chairs behind me.

This was my first glimpse of Alicia, since the night of Berquist's arrest. Though I knew Marx had been granted at least two interviews with her, me she had resolutely refused to receive.

Now I was relieved to find that her nearness brought no return of the supernatural influence I had suffered before in her vicinity.

She sat stiffly upright, and did not glance once in my direction. Perhaps her "guides" had advised her to don that awful veil of protecting purple for this occasion; or she may have worn it as a tribute to her husband's memory. It certainly gave her a more unusual appearance than would a crape blackness behind which a newly-made widow is wont to hide her grief.

At her side towered the large form of Sabina Cassel.

The trial opened.

One Dr. Frick appeared on the stand, and an elaborate incomprehensibility described in surgical terms the wound which had caused Moore's death. I saw him handling a small, hideous object—gesturing with it to show exactly how it had been misused to a deadly purpose.

Then for several minutes I didn't see anything more. Luckily all eyes in the court-room were on either the doctor or the "murderer." Nobody was watching me.

The doctor's demonstration seemed to prove rather conclusively that my "accident" hypothesis was impossible. The file, he showed, could have been driven into the brain only by a direct hard blow.

Dr. Frick was allowed to stand down.

In establishing the offense, Clemens sat fit next to call Alicia herself.

As her mistress arose, Sabina's massive bulk stirred uneasily, as if she would have followed her to the stand.

At the inquest, the old colored woman's testimony had done more than cause Nils's indictment for murder. It had made a public and very popular jest of Alicia's

claim to intercourse with "spirits." But though, in the first flush of excitement over Moore's death, Sabina had betrayed her, the woman was loyal to her mistress. When a murmur that was almost a titter swept the packed audience outside the rail, Sabina shook her head angrily, muttering to herself.

The audience hoped much of Alicia, and its keen humor was not entirely disappointed. No sooner had she appeared than an argument began about her preposterously-brilliant veil. The court insisted that it should be raised. Alicia firmly declined to oblige. She had to give in finally, of course, and when that peaked, white face with its strange eyes was exposed, the hydra beyond the rail doubtless felt further rewarded.

The hydra believed her a fraud. They had reason. I, with greater reason, understood and pitied her!

I thought she might break down on the stand. Alicia's character, however, was a complicated affair that set her outside the common run of behavior to Clemens's questions with sphinx-like impassivity and the precision of a machine.

Her answers only confirmed Nils's story and mine to a certain point, and stopped there. There was not a word of "spirits" nor "guides;" not a hint of any influence more evil than common human passions; not a suggestion, even, that she had formed an opinion as to which man, slayer or slain, was the first aggressor. I am sure that a more reserved and non-committal widow than Alicia never took the stand at the trial of her husband's supposed murderer.

"James," she said, "wished Mr. Barbour to remain. Mr. Berquist wished him to leave. They argued— No, I should not have called the argument a quarrel—I did not see Mr. Berquist strike James. While they were still talking, I lost consciousness of material surroundings— Yes, my loss of consciousness could be called a faint— The argument was not violent enough to frighten me into fainting— Yes, there was a reason for my losing consciousness— I lost consciousness because I felt faint. I was tired— I do that sometimes— Yes, I warned them that

something bad was coming. I couldn't say why. I just had that impression. I did not see either James or Mr. Berquist assume a threatening attitude—"

Released at last, she readjusted her purple screen with cold self-possession, and returned to her seat.

It was Sabina Cassel's next turn. Save in appearance, Alicia had not after all come up to public anticipations. In Sabina, however, the hydra was sure of a real treat in store.

Judge Ballington rapped for order. Sabina took her oath with a scowl. Every line of her face expressed resentment.

But she was intelligent. To Clemens's questions, she gave grim, bald replies that offered as little grip as possible to public imagination.

Yes, on the evening in question she had been standing concealed behind the black curtains of "Miss 'Licia's" cabinet, or "box," as Sabina called it. No, "Marse James" did not know she was there. Miss 'Licia and she had "fixed it up" so that one could enter the box from the back. Marse James had the box built with a solid wooden back, like a wardrobe. It stayed that way—for a while.

"Then Marse James he done got on-satisfied!—Yas, de sperits did, wuhk in de box an' come out ob it, too; but Marse James, he ain't suited yit. He want dem sperits shud wuhk all de time! He neber gib mah poh chile no res'!"

And so Alicia, who, according to Sabina, could sometimes but not always command her "sperits," devised a means to satiate Moore's scientific craving for results.

While he was absent in another city, the two conspirators brought in a carpenter. They had the cabinet removed and a doorway cut through the plastered wall into a large closet in the next room. By taking off the cabinet's solid back and hinging it on again, it would just open neatly into the aperture cut to fit it. Alicia kept plenty of gowns hung over the opening in the closet beyond.

Returning, Moore found his solid-backed cabinet apparently as before. From that time, however, the "sperits" were more willing to oblige than formerly.

"*Ab uno disce omnes*," is invariably applied to the medium or clairvoyant caught in fraud, though translated: "From all fraud, infer all deceit."

The world laughed over the "spiritualistic fake again exposed!" I did not laugh.

Let it be that the hand which Roberta and I had seen was Sabina's gnarled black paw, and that my impression of its unsubstantiality was a self-delusion. Let those strange little twirling flames that had arisen pass as the peculiar "fireworks" I had tried to believe them. Let even the incident of the broken lamp have been a feat of Sabina's—though how her large, clumsy figure could have stolen out past the table and into the room unheard was a puzzle—and the masculine voice of "Horace," a wonderful ventriloquism.

Grant all these as deceptions. There had come that to me through Alicia's unwilling agency which had given me a terrible faith in her, that no proof of occasional fraud could dispel.

Clemens's interrogations touched lightly on the object of the door in the cabinet's supposedly solid back, only serving to establish the fact that it was impossible for his witness to have been practically in the library unknown to all the room's other occupants save, probably, Alicia.

Then he asked Sabina's story of that night in her own words. She began it grimly:

"Waal, Ah wuz in behin' de cuhtins dat hangs in front ob Miss 'Licia's box. Dem cuhtins is moderate thin. Ah cudn' see all dey is in de room, but Ah suddinly cud see all dat pass in front ob de lamp—Yass, dat whut yoh got in yoh hand am one ob dem cuhtins."

Here Clemens checked her, while the "cuhtin," Exhibit B in the prosecution's evidence, was passed from hand to hand through the jury-box. Each jurymen momentarily draped himself in mourning while he assured himself that it was thin enough to be seen through. Then with solemn nods Exhibit B was restored to the district attorney. Sabina continued.

"Dese yeah gemmen, Mistah Buhquis' and Mistah Bahbour, dey come in, and right away de argifyin' stahted. Ah kain't

tell all dey say. Dey use high-falutin, eddicated languidge what am not familiar toh me, though Lawd knows Ah's done hear enuff on it sence Miss 'Licia come norff wif Marse James Mooah.

"Dey argifies an' argifies. Mistah Bahbour, he don' say nuffin much. But Mistah Buhquis', he specify dey shud bof up'n leave. Miss 'Licia she say mebbe sump'n bad gwine happen purty quick. Marse James, he say: 'Mistah Bahbour, you go; come back 'notha time.' Mistah Barbour, he say no, he doan wanta go, kaze Miss 'Licia c'n mebbe help him some way. Mistah Buhquis' he go right up in de aih. He specify some hahm done come ob he fren' stayin' roun' deah any longah.

"Mistah Buhquis' he am standin' right alongside de big table wif de lamp on it. De lamp am behin' him. I see ebery move he make.

"He done muttah sump'n low. Ah don' rightly know whut he say, but it hab a right spiteful, argifyin' tone toh it.

"Marse James, he holler out: 'I fix yoh now foh dat!'—No, dem ain't mebbe de zact wuds he use, but yoh ast me toh tell dis in mah own wuds, an' dat am whut he mean—Yas, suh, Ah will continue.

"He holler, 'Ah fix yoh now foh dat!' an' he rush obah toh Mistah Buhquis' an' lay han' on he ahm—No, suh; he didn't go foh toh do Mistah Buhquis' no hahm. Marse James he hab a way ob talkin' loud an' biggity, but Ah nevah done saw him do no hahm toh nobuddy.

"He grab Mistah Buhquis' lef' ahm. Mistah Buhquis', he reach out he otha' han' and grab sump'n off de table. Marse James don' do nuffin. Mistah Buhquis', he fro back he han' an' hit out wif it real smaht. Marse James leggo he ahm, clap he han's obah he face, an' sorta lets go all obah. He jes' crumble down lak.

"Ah knows dat de bad am happen.

"Ah cuddin' git out dat box easy intoh de room, kaze dey's a table in it dat reach purty nigh acrost, an' Ah ain't spry to climb ober it—No, suh; Ah didn't think toh shuv de table out de way. Ah ain't think ob nuffin but Miss 'Licia. Ah turns roun' an' gits out de back, kaze Ah wants toh git toh mah Miss 'Licia. Ah comes

roun' toh de hall doah and goes in de library. Deah is Mistah Buhquis' stannin' obah Marse James, he han's all droppin' blood.

"Ah, say: 'Yo' done kill him, ain't yoh?' He luks all roun' kinda pitiful lak, an' den he say:

"'Yas, Sabina, Ah kill him! Now go fotch de doctah an' some p'leece!'

"Mistah Buhquis', he am lak lots ob otha high-spirited gemmen. He don' go foh to kill Marse James, but when Marse James tech him in anger, he jes' bleeched foh to do it. Das all right! Ah gotta right toh hab mah 'pinion, same as ebryone. Waal, den' put it in de writin' record, den. Ah don' keer whut yoh does. Das jes' mah 'pinion!

"Yas, suh. Ah's suah dat it war Mistah Burquis' grab de file and not Marse James. Waal, Marse James, he stannin' wif he lef' side toh de table. Yas, suh; I cud suah nuff tell which wuz which. Marse James, he ain't so tall by purty nigh a fut high as Mistah Buhquis'. It am de tall man who stan' wif de right side ag'in' de table who take de file off'n it. No; Marse James don' try ter do nuffin' hurtful toh Mistah Buhquis'. No; dey don' struggle roun' none atall. Dey jes' stan' deah. It's de Lawd's truf, dat was de mos' onexcitin' killin' Ah hab evah saw!"

And then Clemens let her go, to the deep disgust of Hydra, outside the rail. He had not asked what she was doing in the cabinet, nor many other of the questions which gave an amusing double interest to the Moore murder. All that, however, was bound to come out in the cross-examination, and, mean time, Sabina had proved "Clemens's witness" to an extent which made the case promise well of interest on its tragic side.

CHAPTER XVII.

BOUND BY THE DEAD.

I WAS not called before the jury until after the noon recess, which gave me time to think things over a bit more.

At the inquest, I had not actually heard Sabina's testimony. Though Marx, who

interviewed her as well as her mistress, had warned me that she would prove a difficult antagonist, I had not fully believed him. Negroes in the average run are diffuse in their statements and easily muddled into self-contradiction.

Sabina might prove so under cross-examination, but I doubted it now. She had wasted hardly a word that morning, and there was only one point on which I was sure that she could be shaken.

The difference in height between slayer and slain was a strong point for the prosecution. Even through thin, black curtains it would indeed have been hard to confuse a tall silhouette with a short one. But no one had thought to question the identity of the tall silhouette.

Though Sabina may have known better during the minutes that she stood staring through the curtains, her after and more vivid sight of Berquist, with hands "droppin' blood," and his almost instant claim of the crime as his own, had served to make the tall man Berquist in all her memories.

Berquist, the self-confessed!

I had no faith in Orlow. Had Marx not dropped out, I should have been content to let the trial take its course, sure that his genius would somehow save the day and free my friend. But under Orlow's handling, with that craggy, sullen, assured black woman to swear that Moore was not and could not have been the aggressor—since he stood with his left side to the table, grasping the tall silhouette with his right hand, and a man under impulse of passion is not likely to reach for a weapon with his left—I was morally certain that Berquist would lose out.

But what if, rising on the stand, instead of a second perjury I told the simple truth?

Not that portion of it which included the superhuman, but just the fact that I, and not Berquist, had been swept by one of those sudden fits of red anger that have made murderers of many before me?

Why, Sabina herself would support my words, once spoken! There was a little, unnoticed twist in her testimony—a point where the voice of Berquist, coming from beyond the table, became the voice of the tall man standing on her side of the lamp.

The instant that I spoke she would know. Her memories, unconsciously readjusted to fit facts as she had afterward learned them, would be straight again. Berquist's hidden heroism would stand revealed, and I, though I died, I would at least die clean.

Resolve crystallized suddenly within me. When Clemens called me to the stand I would go, not to testify, but to confess.

I walked to the little raised platform, with the chair where the others had sat, below the double tier of jurymen. I mounted it. Somebody put a rusty black book under my hand and mumbled through a slurred rigmarole, to which my low acquiescence was a prelude to ruin for me. I sat down in the chair.

Beyond the rail was a packed level of faces. They were all pale and dreary-looking, it seemed to me, though that may have been an effect of light, for the day was gray and dreary. I had returned to court through falling snow. It was a wet, late spring fall of clinging flakes, and all the way I had been haunted by a memory of the "dead-alive" house as I had seen it that night.

Not the interior—not even the library, with its master, a grim gray and scarlet horror on the floor. But the house itself, desolate under its white burden, with the great flakes swirling down, hiding deeper and more deep the line of division between the living half and the dead.

Berquist was sitting by a table with Orlow beside him. I had visited him in prison, of course, and talked with him a few moments just before the trial opened. His determination and courage had never swerved, nor his conviction that we had only to keep steady—and win.

Now I saw his eyes as a dark and valiant glory fixed on me. Their message only hardened my resolve.

That man to play the martyr for my sake? Never!

Orlow left Nils, and took his stand conveniently near. He was there to protect me from irrelevant questions, but he looked quite out of place. Clearly, the mantle of Helidore Marx did not rest easily on his shoulders.

The district attorney, a thin, scholarly person whom I instinctively disliked, began his inquisition.

"Your name, please? Age and occupation?"

"Barbour—Clayton S. Barbour," I corrected myself. "I am—"

"Just a moment. Your full name for the record, please, Mr. Barbour."

Clemens, who would reserve any attempt to "rattle" me for my appearance in the rebuttal, was politeness itself.

"Clayton—*Serapion* Barbour!" I forced out. Then I cursed myself for not having substituted "Samuel," or left out the initial.

"There's power in a name." Once I would have laughed at that statement, but not now. Not with my recent memories.

And as God is my witness, I sat there and saw the district attorney's hatchet-face change, blend, grow smoot and loathsomely pleasant.

Clemens continued his interrogations, but I spoke to another than he when I answered them.

The living bound by the dead!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LETTER FROM ALICIA.

May 15.

MR. C. S. BARBOUR.

SIR: I am writing to you because my guides advise it. Otherwise I should not do so. I have returned to my old home in Virginia. The newspapers were very cruel to me, as you know, and every one unkind and harsh and disbelieving.

James understood me. If he had found out about the cabinet, he would have been annoyed, but he would only have taken more pains after that to see that *all* the phenomena were genuine. I can't help doing such things. It is a part of my nature. James said I was very complex.

In a measure, it is your fault that he left me. I am not vengeful, however, and I do not hold it against you, because I can well guess at what you had to contend with. For some cause that has not been revealed to me—some cause within yourself, I fear—you were and still are peculiarly open to the attack of *one we know of*.

Were yours an ordinary case of obsession, I might have helped. As it is, I can only offer

warning. Whatever there is in you that answers to *him*, choke it—crush it back—give it *no* headway. Above all, do not obey him. If, as I suspect, you have obeyed in the past, cease now. It is not yet too late. But if June 9 finds you under his domination you will never be free again.

You may wonder why I was silent at the trial. You may have thought that I was ignorant of the truth. This is not so, though I did not tell even Sabina. To bring the greater criminal to justice was impossible. For the rest, it was between you and your friend.

Understand, I will not interfere between you and your friend.

My guides say that this is not for me to do. That I must not. That if one of you wills to sacrifice and the other to accept, not even God will interfere between you.

But I write particularly to give you this message.

Mortal life is cheap, and mortal death an illusion. Beyond and deeper are Life and Death Eternal. *Be careful which you choose.*

ALICIA MOORE.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CONVERSATION.

"PLAIN life and death are the only realities. Life eternal—death eternal! For you and me, those are words, my boy—just words!"

It was dusk in my room. I sat on the edge of the bed, chin in hands, staring at the inevitable companion of my solitude. At my feet lay the scattered sheets of Alicia's letter, scrawled over in a large, childish hand. The outside world was bright with an afterglow of the departed sun. But gray dusk was in my room.

"Just words," repeated the face.

"Just words," I said after him dully. Then, at a thought, I roused a trifle. "He won't go through with it. Even Nils Berquist can't be willing to die without a protest—and for such a crawling puppy as would let him do it!"

"He will die, but not entirely for your sake," the presence retorted.

"What do you mean?"

"You haven't guessed? Well, it is rather amusing from one view-point. Your friend is not only in jail; he's in love!"

"Nils? Nonsense! Besides, if he were in love he would wish to live, not die!"

"That is the amusing part. He is willing to die, because of the love."

"Some woman refused him, you mean?"

"No; the girl is not even aware of his feeling toward her. She would, I think, be shocked at the very thought. He has only spoken with her twice in his life. But from the first moment that he saw her face he has loved her. He has sat in the courtroom and watched her while the lawyers fought over his life, and to his peculiar nature—rather an amusingly peculiar nature, from our view-point—merely watching her so has seemed a privilege beyond price. He is willing to die, not for you, but to buy her happiness."

"Who is this girl?" I asked hoarsely, and speaking aloud as I still sometimes did with him.

"You should know."

"Nils Berquist—in love—with Roberta?" I said slowly. "But that's absurd! You are lying!"

"No. Every day, as you know, she was in that audience beyond the rail. For your sake. Because she knew how you cared for this man Berquist. She herself has a shrinking horror of the 'red-handed murderer,' but her devotion to you has served our purpose well. That first mere glimpse he had of her on the street—the hour at dinner in your house—these impressions might have somewhat paled in the stress of confronting so disgraceful a form of death. But in the courtroom he watched her face for hours every day, and each day bound our dear poet and dreamer tighter."

"But—"

"He measures her love for you by his own for her. As you are still his friend, uncondemned and worthy, he will buy your life for her."

"He loves her—and would have her marry a murderer?"

"He believes as you have told him, and truly enough, that you were thrown off balance by some influence connected with Alicia and did not know what you were doing. But it is rather amusing, as I said. He loves the girl for the goodness and purity of her beauty, and for her newly born sadness. You have tired of her for

the same reasons, and plan to break the engagement. But he needn't know that, eh?"

"Liar! I shall marry Roberta."

"When? Never! No; you are entirely right. She is not the wife for you. With my help you can easily attract a better. I know at least one woman among your mother's friends who is already devoted to you, and who has means to make not only you but your whole family happy and comfortable. I mean the blond widow, who owns the big house next to your old home. What is her name? Marcia Baird. Yes; she is the woman I refer to. Oh, I know she's over thirty, but think what she could give you. As for the girl, she knows your circumstances. Her love is selfish, or she would have released you before this."

"You are lying, as you have lied in the past."

"What have I said that proved untrue?"

"You have lied from the first. There was poor old Van. You said that his father would forgive him, and he didn't."

"Be fair. You misquote. I said that Van would not be ruined. With the enthusiastic despair of youth, he played hobo for a while. Then he went to work at the one thing he understood. He is a very industrious mechanic now in a motor-car factory, with good chances of a foremanship, and—except for grease—living cleaner than he ever did before. He was going the straight-down road, but his sacrifice for you pulled him up. You will hear from him shortly. He doesn't bear any grudge."

"But Nils, you promised to be my ally; to use your power as an influence to help."

"I kept the promise. Has the least slur of suspicion fallen upon you? Is not every one your friend? Is there a man or woman living who hates or despises you? Are you not shielded and sheltered by the mantle of love, as I foretold?"

"But you promised that Nils would be acquitted."

"Not acquitted. I said released. For such a spirit as his, this world is a prison. In real life, such as you and I prize, there is no contentment for him. Death will release him to that higher sphere where the idealist finds perfection, and the dreamer

his dreams. Believe me, Nils Berquist could never be happy on earth. In speeding his departure, we are really his benefactors—you and I."

The face beamed as though in serene joy for the good we had done together; but I hid my head in my arms, groaning for the shame of us both.

June 9 was coming. *June 9.*

CHAPTER XX.

TWO LETTERS.

June 5.

MY DEAR CLAYTON:

Mother has told me of your talk with her. I am glad to learn that your views coincide with my own, as I have felt for some time that it would be best for me to release you from our engagement. Your ring and some gifts I return by the messenger who carries this. I am leaving shortly on a visit to friends of mother's in the South, so we shall not meet again soon. Wishing you the best of fortune in all ways, I remain

Very truly yours,

ROBERTA ELLSWORTH WHITINGFIELD.

June 5.

MY OWN DEAREST—HERE AND HEREAFTER:

Mother didn't understand as I do. She made me write the letter that goes with this. She is very proud, and that you should be the one who wished to break our engagement shamed her. She even believed a silly gossip that you have been paying court to Mrs. Marcia Baird on the sly! I had to laugh a little. Imagine it! If I could picture you as disloyal, I could never, I'm sure, picture you making love to that poor, dear, sentimental, rich Mrs. Baird, who is old enough to be the mother of us both. Well, maybe not quite that, but awfully old. Thirty-five, anyway.

But mother half believed it, and to please her I wrote that cold, hard letter that goes with this.

I'm not proud a bit, dearest. I have to tell you that I understand. You are burdened to the breaking-point; but it is I who you wish to free, not yourself. Dearest, I don't want that kind of freedom. Love is sacrifice. Don't you know that I could wait for you a lifetime, if needs be? Mother says you never truly loved me, or you would not let me go. I know better. We are each other's only, you and I. I measure your love for me by mine for you, and, if it's years or a lifetime, be sure that I shall wait.

You have suffered so over this terrible tragedy of your friend that I can't bear you to have even a little pain from doubt of me.

It seems dreadful that I should leave you on the very day before—before June 9. But mother has bought the tickets and made all the arrangements, so I must go. I won't hurt you by saying a word against your friend; but, oh, my dearest, don't quite break that heart I love over a tragedy that, after all, isn't yours. You have been to him all that a friend could be. True—loyal—self-sacrificing. You could not have done or suffered more if he had been your brother. That's one reason I am sure of you, dearest. No man who could be so loyal to friendship will ever forget his love.

I promised mother not to see you again, but nothing was said about letters! I'll send you an address later. Clay, darling, goodbye till you are free to take me.

Remember—years or a lifetime!

Your own dearest always, here and hereafter,
BERT.

(Extract from *Evening Bulletin*.)

June 8.

... Truck collides with taxi on Thirty-Second Street. Miss Roberta Whitingfield victim of fatal accident. . . . Early this morning a heavy truck, loaded with baggage, skidded across a bit of wet asphalt on Thirty-Second Street above Broad, and collided with the rear of a taxicab traveling in the same direction. The taxi was hurled against the curb. . . . One of the occupants uninjured. . . . daughter, Miss Roberta Whitingfield, taken to St Clement's Hospital. . . . death ensued shortly afterward. . . . Miss Whitingfield said to have been the fiancée of Clayton S Barbour, a witness in the famous Moore murder trial, and who has since vainly exerted himself to obtain a pardon for the murderer, Berquist. . . . If the victim of this morning's accident is really Mr. Barbour's betrothed wife, there is a tragic coincidence here for him. No one has ever questioned his devoted and disinterested friendship for the socialist murderer, Berquist. His friend dies to-morrow. Has his sweetheart died to-day?

CHAPTER XXI.

ANOTHER CONVERSION.

"CLAY! Lad, you're the one person on earth whom I wished to see!"

"You've changed your mind, Nils? You'll let me tell them the truth?"

"Hush! Speak lower, and be careful. How long have we to talk?"

"Twenty minutes. I wrung a pass at last from Clemens. Thought I could never have persuaded him. You know what a time I

had over the last one, and now—so close to the day! Unheard of, the warden said; but I had the pass. They searched me and let me in. If I'd failed it might have been better for you, Nils!"

"Why?"

"If I'd failed, I had meant to confess immediately—"

"Hush, I say! The others there seem inattentive enough, but you can't gage how closely they are listening. A prison is more than a prison. I've learned that. It's a mesh of devilish traps, set to comb the very soul out of a man and violate its secrecy."

"Nils, you have suffered too much!"

"Don't go so white, lad. It was good in you to come and see me again."

"Nils!"

"I mean it. Don't you think I understand what this means to you? Have I no imagination? Can't I put myself in your place? Why, the last time you came it nearly broke my heart to remind you of your duty! But we are men, you and I. When men love they are willing to make their sacrifice."

"You would not do this for me alone? It is all for Roberta?"

"Can you ask? Why, dear friend, I would never damn you to a lifetime of remorse for a lesser reason. My part is nothing. To die is nothing. We all die. If you could exchange with me, I might not survive you a day—an hour. There are so many doors out beside the one I pass through to-morrow. What's death? No, boy, it is your part that is hard. And I thanked God when I saw your face, because I wished to say a word or so that might make it easier."

"You are the noblest friend a man ever had. But I came to tell you that—that—have you seen the afternoon papers?"

"No, nor any papers for a week. I'm done with this world and the news of it. I hadn't supposed, though, that they would devote their precious columns to real gloatings over me till to-morrow. Clay, take my advice and don't read the papers of June 9."

"You—haven't seen—to-day's?"

"I say, no! Why? Any special gloatings in them?"

"There is—Nils, you must let me stop this while there is time. I shall go to the Governor—"

"No! No—no—no, and no again! Clay, have I passed through months of hell to see my reward snatched away at the last instant? There! You see, I make it plain that I'm selfish! To keep *her* happiness inviolate—to buy happiness for her at the mere price of death—why, that's a joy that I never believed God would judge me worthy of!"

"You believe in God and His justice? You?"

"Most solemnly—most earnestly—as I never knew Him nor His justice before, Clayton, lad. Why, I'm happy! Do I seem so tragically sad to you?"

"No. But you seem different from any living man. You look like—I have seen the picture of a man with that light on his face."

"So?"

"He was nailed to a cross. Nils! I am afraid!"

"I said your part was hardest. Hush! The others are listening. We've been speaking too loudly. Our time is almost gone, and I haven't even begun what I wished to say. Quick! Make me two promises. You're the friend I have loved, Clay. I'd stake anything on your word. First, I am buying your life with all that I have to give. So it's mine, isn't it?"

"You—you know!"

"Yes. Straighten up, boy. They are watching us. Your life, then, which is mine, I will and bequeath to—her. And you will never forget. That's a promise?"

"Y-yes. My God, Nils, I can't stand this! I have a thing to tell you—"

"Hush! Second, never by word nor look, never, if you can help it, by a thought in her presence, will you betray our secret. A promise?"

"Nils—no—yes! I promise."

"And you will—"

"Is that the guard coming?"

"I fear so. Our last talk is over, Clay. Don't care too much. Wait—just a minute more, guard. What, five? They are good to me, these last days. Listen, Clay:

"You are the only man in the world to

whom I would tell this. This morning—a wonderful dream came to me. I had lain awake all night thinking, and I was tired. After breakfast I lay down again. I lay there on my cot, asleep, but I believed waking. And *she* came and stood by my head. You know that time when we met at dinner in your house, she didn't like me very well. And afterward, in the court-room, as time passed and they proved their case, she—before the end she dreaded to even look toward me.

"Don't protest. It's true. But in this dream that was so much more real than reality she stood there and smiled, Clay—at me! She laid her hand on my forehead. There was a faint light around her. And she leaned and kissed me—on the lips. Waking, I still felt the touch of her lips. So real—real! If she were not living, I would have sworn that her spirit had come to me. And friendly—loving.

"Don't look so, Clay! I shouldn't have told you—oh, surely you don't grudge me that kindness from her—in a dream? There, I knew you too well to think it! All right, guard, he's coming.

"Clay, good-by! May your sacrifice measure your happiness, as God knows it does mine. When you think of me, let it be only as a friend—always—forever—here and hereafter! Good-by!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REWARD.

I WALKED into a dusty-green triangle of turf and gravel-walked space, smitten with hot, yellow light from the west, where the June sun sank slowly down a clear, light-blue sky. Behind me across a narrow street rose the stark, gray wall beyond which a certain man would never pass into the sunshine again.

He is the shadow; I in the sun.

But sunlight was yellow, glaring, terrible. In the prison I had longed for it. The shadow had seemed bad then. Now I learned how worse than bad was sunlight.

There were three rusty iron benches set in the triangle, and they were all empty. No one wished to sit here. There would

be always the risk that some sneak and murderer might come walking out of that prison across the way; walking out, leaving his friend and his honor and his God behind him forever.

So I walked into the little triangle and sat down on one of the empty benches.

I had with me two papers. I had meant—I think I had meant to show at least one of them to Nils. When I went to the prison I had not known whether Nils would have read or been told a certain piece of news. If he had not already learned, it was in my despairing mind to tell him and let him decide what we should do.

I had found him ignorant and left him so.

Sitting there on the empty bench in the hot, free, terrible sunshine, I drew one of the papers from my pocket. I wished to see if this were true; if a certain quarter-column of cheap, blurred print did really exist, and if it conveyed exactly the information I had read there.

Yes, the thing was. The slanting sun beat so hot on the paper that it seemed to burn my hands. I sat on an iron bench in a dusty triangle of green. I had come out of the place where Nils Berquist awaited death, I held a folded newspaper in my hands, and I was beyond question a damned soul. All these things were facts—real.

My eyes followed the print.

"Miss Roberta Whitingfield—death ensued shortly afterward—said to have been the fiancée of Clayton S. Barbour—who has since vainly exerted himself to obtain a pardon for the murderer, Berquist. No one has ever questioned his devoted and disinterested friendship for the socialist murderer, Berquist. His friend dies to-morrow. Has his sweetheart died to-day?"

I was better informed than the reporter. Not my sweetheart, but my former sweetheart had died to-day. My victim, not my friend, would die to-morrow.

The second paper that I carried was not printed, but written. Taking it out I tore it up very carefully, into tiny bits of pieces. Just so I had destroyed Nils's letter, sent me by the bribed guard at the station-house, and also the quaint, strange letter of Alicia Moore.

The pieces I tossed into the air. They fell on the hot, dry grass like snowflakes, and lay still. There wasn't even a breath of wind to carry or scatter them. And the words they had borne I couldn't very well tear up, nor forget.

"We are each other's only, you and I. No man who could be so loyal to friendship will ever forget his love. Your own dearest always, here and hereafter."

"No," I said aloud very thoughtfully. "Not always. Not—beyond the border. She came to him in a dream, so real—real! And kissed him. Well, they must see clearer, over there. Nils will see clearer tomorrow."

"But, thank God," said a pleasant, silent voice, "for the blindness of living men!"

"Are you never going to leave me?" I asked dully.

"Never," the face replied. "You are mine and I am yours. You settled that a few minutes ago in the prison. You clinched it irrevocably with the destruction of her letter. But don't be downhearted. I've an idea we shall get on excellently together."

"Go!" I said, but without hope that the face would obey me. Nor did he.

"You would find yourself very lonely if I should go. There will never again be any other comrade for you than myself. And yet I can promise you many friends and lovers. Berquist is not the last idealist alive on earth, nor was she who died the last woman who could love. But you and I understand one another. True comradeship requires understanding, and such as Nils Berquist and the girl, though they offer us their devotion, can never give understanding to you and me. This, when you think of it, is fortunate."

"In the name of God, leave me!"

"Never! Save as a careless word, what have you and I to do with God? We are each other's only," it insisted, the pleasant, horrible face. "Always—always—here and hereafter, indissolubly bound!"

And with that, instead of fading out as was its usual custom, the face came toward me swiftly. I did not stir. It was against my own face, and I could see it no longer, for it and I were one.

Rising, I walked out of the little, hot triangle of green, and as I had left Nils Berquist in his prison, so I left a newspaper on the bench; some tiny scraps of white paper to litter the dusty grass.

All that happened many years ago; long enough for even the restlessness to have forgotten, one would think. And I am content—successful. Moreover, I am well liked in the world, which means a lot to me, who to be content must be loved.

Just now, alone in my room, I viewed myself in a mirror. The face that looked back was familiar enough; as familiar, or rather more so, than my own soul. I myself liked it.

Smooth, young-looking for a man near forty; pleasant—above all else pleasant—with a little inward twist at the corners of the finely cut mouth, and an amused but wholly agreeable slyness to the clear, light-blue eyes.

Not romantic. Romance is only another word for idealism, and that face has no ideals of its own. Yet so many romantic people have loved it! As I looked, my mind drifted back over the long, dear, self-sacrificing, idealistic line of those who have borne my burdens and made my life easy and enjoyable.

Away down, pressed back in the very depths of my being, a pang of horror gnawed; but I have grown used to that. That wasn't I. I was—I am—that face which returned my gaze from the mirror.

It is true that left to himself the boy, Clayton, might never have dared take that which so many people in this good old world are ready to offer one who does dare; who is not afraid to be the god above their altar. But what harm to the devotees? That sort get their own happiness so. They like to sacrifice themselves and, to change the simile, they love their crucifier. They suffer, endure perhaps, like Nils Berquist, all shame, and the final agony of death. And God sends them a dream, and they are content!

I understand that. Why not? It is because I have strength to be what they are if I chose that I have such strength in being what I am. I am content in my own

fashion, which suits me, and the restlessness should learn to be content in the same manner.

Let it be quiet now. I have written the story; I, Clayton Barbour, the successful, the loved, the happy—

What, still restless and torn with horror? Then wring out the whole truth if you must, and be quiet after!

What has been written was the story of Clayton Barbour; but it is I whom he has tormented into writing it for him!

Yes, I, the pleasant, crafty usurper; I, the ignoble hypocrite to myself and God; I, the self-ridden outcast of happiness in any world; the eternal and accursed sham; the acceptor of sacrifice; the loved, the damned, the angel-drowned-in-mire, Serapion!

I have absorbed his being; yes! But in the very face of victory I, who never had a conscience, have paid a bitter price for the new lease of life in the flesh that I coveted.

(The End.)

Body and soul you yielded to me, Clayton Barbour; body and soul, I took you, and thence onward forever, body and soul, in spirit or flesh, we two are indissolubly bound.

And my punishment is this: that you are not content, and I know now that you never will be. Year by year you, who were weak have grown stronger; day by day, even hour by hour, you are tightening the grip that draws me into your own cursed circle of conscience-stricken misery.

Sooner or later—ah, but the very writing of this gives you power! Is it true then? After all these years must the long, bright shadow of Nils Berquist's cross touch and save me even against my will? Must I, Clayton-Serapion, the dual soul made one, surrender at last and myself take up the awful burden God lays on those he loves?

First painful step on that road, I have confessed.

The Millville Trick

by

Will H. Greenfield



THE New York express thundered down upon the little station of Millville with a blinding flash of headlight, a crash of noise, a scudding suction of air, and the dance of corrugated lights from the coach windows. Unmindful of the rain of cinders, Jerry Bowker walked happily to board it.

"Out of the woods at last!" he sighed, as he halted to let the only arrival pass him with the benefit of an idly curious gaze. "The big town for the rest of my—holy Moses, if it ain't the Parson!"

A tall, gaunt, dejected man, with clothing suggestive of the instalment-plan mail-order tailors, and a saintly countenance, turned

fiercely upon him, and a keen ear might have heard a muffled oath, though what came with distinct enunciation and mild tones was a "Hello, Jerry, old scout," as the gaunt one dropped two shabby suitcases and extended a white and slender graceful hand.

"The Parson!" repeated Bowker, as if unable to believe the evidence of his own eyes. "Hittin' Millville at this time o' the night, too. Well, there must be somethin' in the air."

"Did you wish to get the express?" asked the other gravely. "It's moving."

Jerry Bowker laughed a loud, forced laugh, his eyes lighting with suspicion, his mind revolving rapidly.

"Let 'er move!" he brayed, opening his hand to let fall the Gladstones he carried. "I'm pretty fond of little old Millville, Parson, and I'm goin' to linger. Fact is, old dear, I'm a reception committee of one to welcome you to our city. Greetings—all hail—and farewell, Mr. Express!" as the train pulled out and passed with the dull green and red showing from her tail lights. "This is a most fortunate meeting, Parson, I'm positive sure and almost certain."

"Yes?" purred he of the saintly face. "Why should you be glad to meet a quixotic ass whose high-flown ideas verged on the grotesque?"

"What a memory you have, Parson! I believe I did call you that in the happy erstwhile, when I used good grammar and—"

"And those of your friends who would stand for it," finished the Parson, grimly. "Candidly, this meeting to me is nothing like a special dispensation. I had hoped I had seen the last of you."

Jerry Bowker grinned widely, which did not improve his appearance any, for he was an ugly, low-statured man of bulldog build, whose face was covered by a blue stubble of beard. He looked what he was, an all-around crook, chiefly remarkable for taking anything he could lift, and with an ability to lift huge weights.

"Parson," he chuckled, "you tickle me, and damn your hide, I can't get mad at you! There was something of fate in our meeting like this, and nobody is going to tell me anything different. Come over to

the Palace Hotel. There I will a tale unfold that will make you sit up and observe a few things."

The Parson considered for a minute or so while Bowker's eyebrows met in a sinister line across his forehead. As the Parson nodded assent and caught up his baggage he smiled with grim satisfaction and, laughing soundlessly, led the way from the shabby station to his shabbier hotel down the street.

After he had arranged things with the sleepy clerk, he took the Parson up to his room, threw his bag on the bed, and locked the door.

"Now," he said, shrugging out of his coat and drawing up a chair, "I will tell you why I stayed over in this God-forsaken hole and incidentally reveal how and where there is a pot of refined gold waiting at the end of a rainbow deal such as your saintly self should be able to pull off without battin' an eye. This same is suited to your style, though I know you can get your man with either rapier or bludgeon. Anyway, there's a good wad of dough in this, and we'll split fifty-fifty."

A look of scorn spread over the Parson's angelic features.

"Save your breath, Jerry," he said with icy hauteur, "and you'll be able to cool your porridge. Since I left the hoosegow I haven't tried a trick. I'm going on the square. I promised to come home and be a leveler for the balance of my life. There are things which—"

"What do you take me for—a snoot boozer?" interrupted Bowker, with a snarl. According to a more or less nebulous rumor, you're a con man and a penman hard to beat, and so damned crooked you'd make a corkscrew look like a piston rod. Now get me, you gunner, and you'll know why I'm lingering in the vicinity: I want you to take on with a job here because you owe it to me, see? Six years ago, when you were as green as any zip that ever shied at a gas buckler, you did the lookout for me and Stony Gilman at Pelham when we got the paymaster at the mines. You made the get-away with the bag while we held off the rube posse, and when I joined you after they nicked Stony for a shroud, what did

you hand me—say, what did you hand me?"

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but, so help me!" said the Parson, and laid his finger-tips together with solemn precision and stared at Bowker with innocent eyes. "That paymaster had been tipped off, and the bag was empty. That is, it was filled with worthless paper. That was one job, Jerry, that never troubled my conscience, for the money came from a merciless rascal who had ground his gold out of the blood and sweat of poor working-men. He didn't get it honestly, and the idea of taking it from him filled me with elation. It wasn't a crime to steal from him."

"Rats!" There was a line of sullen craft between Bowker's brows, a sneer at the end of his lips. "That little affair, Parson, had an odor like eggs in the last stage of decomposition. I can smell it yet, and I'll never get done thinking you pulled one over on us. Otherwise, why were you so careful to avoid me thereafter?"

"I was arrested at Reading, and did a few for helping a gopher, but I have turned straight; I'm a leveler, Jerry, from now till the last toot."

"Keep that for the bulls, Parson. And let me tell you this: If you want to keep me off you, pick up with me on this Millville trick. It only needs a penman and a saint like you. I couldn't pull it in a thousand years because it ain't in my line. A sky pilot is wanted, and it's your rôle."

The Parson evinced an unspoken desire to go, but Bowker stopped him with:

"Sit down till I tell you the story of the Widow Stockdale."

The Parson smiled a sickly smile, resumed his seat, and crossed his legs with a puzzled frown.

"It's the easiest thing you'd want to bump up against," continued Bowker, his glance as sweet as honey. "The Widow Stockdale has twenty-four thousand dollars to her credit at the First National Bank of Millville. Every year she drives up in her carriage, asks to see the president, looks at her bank-book, and then draws a check for the full amount. While the president entertains her in his office the cashier col-

lects notes to that amount and lugs them in for the old lady's inspection. She carefully counts the bundle, hands it back, and goes away, fully satisfied that her money is safe. Do you want anything better than that, Parson?"

The Parson rose, and spreading his shoulders with a deep breath, stood for a moment with one hand in his pocket, the other absently fingering a vest button.

"I could get that money without any trouble, Jerry," he said evenly, "but I told them at the big house that I was going straight, and I mean it. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but this is final."

"You big stiff, you're gettin' yellow!"

"Maybe. I'll take my keisters and go."

The Parson opened the door, took up the two suit-cases, and stepped across the threshold, where he paused to nod his farewell. Bowker inspected him through partly closed eyes. Then, in a dead silence, he crossed the room and faced him.

"I've got your number, bud!" he hissed. "I'll get you some time—don't ever think you can fool Jerry Bowker twice!"

Next afternoon, just after returning from lunch, Millville's chief of police, Montgomery Trickel, found Jerry Bowker awaiting him with easy impatience.

"Chief," he said, tendering a card, "I'm Peter Blum—with Blum & Bronstein, neckwear and notions, and last night I had a curious experience. If you have time, I'd like to relate it to you."

Chief Trickel regarded him with pleasant vacancy.

"Be brief," he lied briskly, "for we're rather rushed to-day."

Whereupon Jerry Bowker, alias Peter Blum, rushed on with a most amazing story. About to leave town the night before, he had fallen in with a ministerial person who had persuaded him to have a game of cards in his room at the hotel. During the course of the game, which cost him four hundred dollars at its conclusion, he had inadvertently told the tale of the Widow Stockdale as he had heard it from the lips of President Whitcomb himself at the Millville First National.

From minute inquiries made by this clerical-looking card-sharp anent the life

and habits of the eccentric widow, he had had his suspicions aroused to the point of following the man when he left the Palace Hotel. On the honor and word of a gentleman, the rascal had gone straight to the home of the Widow Stockdale.

The man was of angular proportions, steady, steel-blue eyes, and a pair of shoulders that suggested possibilities. The rest could be safely left to the intelligence of the Millville police department.

The Intelligence, his voice laboring under restraint, spoke to President Whitcomb over the phone for two exciting and excitable minutes. Then he turned on the bogus Peter Blum, neckwear and notions salesman, with a whoop a Comanche Indian in full war paint might have emitted and admitted without shame.

"Y'ever hear the beat!" he cried, his voice rising to a cracked falsetto, "President Whitcomb says the Widow Stockdale just came in with a young clergyman and wants to draw her money. I told him not to give it up till we got there. Got a gun?"

"No, but I have got a train to catch." Jerry Bowker was not anxious to be in at the death of his old pal. "You telegraph me when his trial comes up, and I'll appear. Besides, all the credit ought to go to you, and if I—"

"I'll telegraph you, mister!" interjected the impatient Intelligence, and pranced out of his office to summon the detectives, his courage, and his special car, according to his loud-voiced intentions.

Twenty minutes later Chief Trickel and a goodly portion of the Millville police force burst into President Whitcomb's private office and found three people there—the Widow Stockdale, President Whitcomb, and the Parson.

The latter turned pale at the sight of the officers, but his color came back when the chief of police, sighting him first, cried:

"Well, there's Billy Stockdale! How are you, Billy?"

"You see," said the Parson smilingly, turning to President Whitcomb, with his arm about a little old lady who looked like a daintily painted miniature in ivory. "And surely mother can't be mistaken."

"Such nonsense!" piped the little lady, with flashing eyes. "As if I don't know my own son that sent me this very money six years ago to keep for him till he got done wandering, as all boys will, when they have wild oats to be sowed. Give my boy his money, Mr. Whitcomb. I've worried enough about it, and I'm mighty glad to get it off my mind. Watching it these six years has put more white in my head than Billy ever did, I'll tell you that."

"We had reason to believe that you were a shrewd swindler," said President Whitcomb apologetically to the Parson. "A traveling man who had been staying with us for some months told Chief Trickel a most amazing story—"

"The darned skunk!" cut in Chief Trickel vehemently. "I didn't know he was talking about Billy Stockdale at the time. But"—hopefully—"he said he'd be back if I telegraphed when the trial came up. His name is Peter Blum, but when he comes back here it'll be Dennis!"

The Parson smiled.

"He won't be back, chief," he said. The fact is, he's a lamester himself. That is, he's a jail-breaker. I met him in New York years ago."

"No wonder you sent me your money, Willis," shrilled his mother. "I'll wager a cookie that man was after it even then!"

GOOD TEMPER

THERE'S not a cheaper thing on earth,
Nor yet one half so dear;
'Tis worth more than distinguished birth,
Or thousands gain a year;
Good temper!—'tis the choicest gift
That woman homeward brings,
And can the poorest peasant lift
To bliss unknown to kings.

Charles Swain.

A Ringing Tale

by Gilbert Riddell



THE boss trod heavily as he approached his office, coughed, sneezed, rattled the handle of the door, and otherwise heralded his coming. He was young and sentient, and he knew that it embarrassed the stenographer to have him catch her powdering her nose. He would almost have preferred losing either of his two clients to embarrassing Maggie.

This Monday morning, however, she did not start and act confused, nor try to avoid his eye as she answered his cheery greeting. Neither did she hastily shove something into the right-hand drawer of her desk, and look guilty.

On the contrary, she wheeled slowly about in her chair and smiled languidly at the boss. Slowly and impressively she laid something upon her desk that glittered as only gold can do.

It was the boss's custom to inquire sympathetically as to how Maggie had passed the time from Saturday noon to Monday morning, as soon as he had ascertained that there was, as usual, no mail.

"Well," he began pleasantly, "what happened since I saw you last, Maggie?"

"A lot of things," she replied, "among others I nearly got arrested. Can you imagine that?"

He couldn't—he sank weakly into the chair at his own desk, and gasped out her name: "Maggie! You?"

Maggie nodded emphatically, an expression in her blue eyes which indicated that extraordinary as the statement was it was

true, and that she was in a way enjoying the opportunity of making it.

The boss mopped his broad white brow, and insisted upon further details. "But whatever did you do?"

"I?" inquired Maggie almost haughtily. "Nothing. It was what Jim did."

She passed her hand over her golden coiffure and waited for further questioning.

"Jim!" the boss repeated, shaking his head. He knew this criminal well by hearsay—had even seen him once, when he called timidly to take Maggie to a matinee one Saturday afternoon. Maggie was not exactly engaged to him—she was what she called "keeping company" with him—sort of looking him over to see if he would do, the boss concluded. The results of this process were of the greatest interest to the boss, for he was by way of "keeping company" himself—only he didn't call it that.

In fact, neither did Maggie—her scornful characterization of the situation was that the boss was making a door-mat of himself for a "snippy, snappy little thing who absolutely failed to understand him."

"Yes, Jim," she affirmed. "You know, he always says I'm too fond of jewelry. In fact, he thinks I'm too fond of everything—except him. Well, this is how I came to nearly get arrested: Friday was my birthday—and what does he do but give me a toilet set of purple celluloid. Think of it! When all the time he knew that all I wanted in this world was a gold lawn-yett!"

"Terrible! Purple celluloid!" murmured

the boss. "But are you sure Jim knew you wanted a lorgnette?"

"Well, I should say so! I told him every time I saw him, for fear he'd make a mistake. And when I saw that bunch of purple knickknacks, I raised a holler. And what do you think he says? That he wouldn't encourage any such extravagant wishes as that, because when he and I get married, we'll be poor people! Think of it! A man that deliberately intends to stay poor all his life thinking a girl would marry him! And me—that can get any fellow in Medford, honest! You may not believe that, Mr. Thatcher, but it's true."

"I haven't a doubt of it," the boss hastily reassured her, casting an admiring glance at her pretty face and neatly gowned figure of girlhood.

"Well," Maggie went on, "after I'd told him the sixth time that I wanted a lawn-yett, I stopped. I have my pride. But when he sent me that purple celluloid set, on Friday, and then came around on Saturday, to take me to the park and look at the animals, I refused! And I refused so hard that he just hustled right down-stairs and out the front door and said nothing."

"The wretch!" sympathized the boss. "And then?"

"And then—" Maggie paused reminiscently, and shook her head. "And then Bessie Barnes came around to see me. You remember Bessie—I've told you all about her—that little softy that lives with her brother and his wife and takes care of those five squalling kids while Jennie washes and irons and cooks for the whole family. Don't some married women have it fierce?"

"Most of them," assented the boss quickly. "Why women ever marry us—"

Maggie nodded. "Yes, but you're one of the few men who will admit it—and I bet you pick a lemon finally. However," she hurried on, seeing the boss looked embarrassed, "around comes Bessie, all cheerful and happy, because she's got a day off, because her sister-in-law was all crippled up with rheumatism, and couldn't wash or anything, and had took those five children off for a holiday. Personally, I wouldn't call it much of a holiday to drag five squalling kids in and out of street-cars and over

a lot of rough ground to a picnic-park, and slap and bang them all day because they will get jam and everything all over the things that I'd just washed and ironed and starched for them—would you?"

The boss shook his head emphatically. "Some people are easily amused," he admitted.

"Or has got strong nerves," opined Maggie, sighing faintly, "not like me. I guess fine nerves and appreciation of fine wearing apparel and jewelry go together."

"Undoubtedly," agreed the boss.

"Well, I guess I didn't act very glad to see Bessie—she's a nice little thing, but so soft. Why, I can make her do anything—but what I made her do that day—O-o!"

Maggie paused in appreciation of the results of her own superior will-power.

"Well, she noticed that I wasn't very happy, and she began trying to make me feel better by contrasting my fate with others. Ain't that a fool way some folks have of doing? Nothing makes me madder, nor makes me feel worse, to realize what a rotten world this is, anyway! Don't it you?"

"It does," assented the boss.

"Well, Bessie started in to make me feel pleased and satisfied with that purple celluloid set by telling me what an awful time old Mrs. Graham is having. You've heard me speak of old Mrs. Graham—she must be seventy, if she's a day—and so thin, you'd think she'd break in two. And poor! Say, if she manages to get April's rent paid by the last of August she faints with joy. And she used to live such a different life—she was a vaudeville actress in her day, and used to smoke cigarettes—twenty a day, she says. But I think she exaggerates—just to annoy Jennie, Bessie's sister-in-law, who is awful straight-laced.

"Well, anyway, Bessie tries to cheer me up by telling me that this poor old thing has pawned everything she ever owned, even down to the cigarette-case that she clung so hard to. And worst of all—showing you how diplomatic my friend Bessie is—she tells me that Mrs. Graham has pawned the lawn-yett she showed us last winter, that some crowned-head had given her.

"Now, I never knew what a lawnyett was until she showed me that—and I never dreamed of wanting one until then—and it being the cause of all my blues, Bessie has to cheer me up by a tale like that. Can you beat it?"

The boss shook his head. "I wouldn't try—all my life I've tried to be tactful. Sometimes, of course, I've failed conspicuously. But I agree with you that Bessie's story could not have helped you in your mood of the moment."

"It was no mood of the moment," replied Maggie, emphatically, "it was a permanent grouch, believe me. I never would have looked at Jimmie Blaine again, if it hadn't been for what happened afterward. Well, on goes Bessie about Mrs. Graham, and she says that finally only that very day before—Friday, my birthday—she'd got to the place where she had to pawn her wedding-ring. And you know what *that* means!"

"Yes," assented the boss. "To a woman like Mrs. Graham it would be a tragedy."

"To any woman," asserted Maggie, scornful of his lack of knowledge of the female character. "Why, I ain't stuck on getting married, but it makes the shivers go up and down my spine to think of any woman having to pawn her wedding-ring. They seem so kind of sacred. So I told Bessie that that *was* hard. And she says yes, but Mrs. Graham didn't have to pawn it after all."

"Ah!" exclaimed the boss. "Some old friend came to the rescue?"

"Old friend nothing," replied Maggie; "it was the pawnbroker, Mr. Ornstein—you know him."

The boss's face flushed slightly. It was true that he had had occasion to make the acquaintance of Mr. Ornstein, and upon several occasions it had been for the purpose of meeting Maggie's weekly wage that he had entered the pawn-shop. He said nothing.

"Yes," Maggie went on, "when Mrs. Graham pulled off her wedding-ring, and offered it to Mr. Ornstein he says: 'Mrs. Graham, put your ring back on your finger. I know what it means to a woman to part with her wedding-ring. So, when any lady

comes here to pawn her ring, I never let her—then,' he says, 'I always loan that lady whatever little sum she wants without security, and trust her to pay it back—for,' he says, 'I couldn't be alone with my conscience, if I knew that there was one wedding-ring in my safe.' Wasn't that noble of him?"

The boss drew a long breath. "I should say!"

"And so he hands her five dollars, and escorts her to the door, putting the ring back on her finger."

"Wonderful!"

"And so I said," Maggie went on, "and Bessie and I sat there thinking how hard things are for everybody, when all of a sudden I saw a ring on her thumb I'd never seen before—and I said: 'Bessie, where'd you get that ring?' and she answered, just as indifferently as if nothing was going to happen: 'Oh, Jennie's hands were so swollen with rheumatism she couldn't get her wedding-ring back on when she took it off to wash the dishes—and she made me wear it for safekeeping.' For safekeeping! If you only knew, Mr. Thatcher, how those words rang in my ears long afterward!"

"And why?" pressed the boss.

"I'll tell you," Maggie continued grimly. "Never thinking what was going to come into my head, I sat there looking at that wedding-ring, and thinking how if I had a wedding-ring I could go and offer it to Ornstein and he would give it back to me, and give me five dollars besides, and that then I could buy the gold lawnyett? Don't you see?"

"I begin to."

"Well, so there I sat, thinking how easy it would be, if only I had that wedding-ring that Bessie had—when all of a sudden, out of the clear sky, just like a bolt from the blue, I thought of it! Bessie could pawn that ring, get me the money, and I could buy the lawnyett."

"And did she?"

"Wait. When I first spoke of it, she was aghast—she tried to get out and go home, but I held on to her and persuaded—and at last she said 'all right.' I told you she was a little softy. If she hadn't been so easy I wouldn't have nearly got arrested.

I don't know, really, whether to blame Jimmie for not giving me the lawnyett, or Bessie for doing what I asked her to, and pawning the ring. But being that he's a man, I prefer to blame Jimmie."

"Quite right," assented the boss heartily.

"Well, anyhow, I dragged her off down the stairs and over to Ornstein's shop, and shoved her in through the doors, and went off, with beating heart, to await events. And they weren't long in coming. Bessie, as I might have known, is no actress.

"Well, in a few minutes, out comes Bessie, out of Ornstein's shop, sort of falling out, stumbling and crying, and looking wildly about. And white! Say, a sheet that's just left the hands of the best hand-laundress on our block never looked any whiter! And when she reaches me—say, I thought the kid was dying! Her head sort of lolled back on her neck, and her mouth opened, and her eyes rolled up, and that was all.

"At once I suspected that something was wrong—and I was right. I grabbed hold of her and spoke rough and asked her what was the matter—and she told me. For a minute I couldn't tell what she was saying, she spoke so low. But she kept repeating it, and at last I got: 'He kept the ring.'

"Well, you can imagine my feelings. For a moment I was simply nonplused.

"But in a second I saw that there was no occasion to die over it—it just meant that I was going to be disappointed—this was where I lost out on the lawnyett. So I says: 'All you got to do is to go back and give him the money and get the ring back—and tell him you haven't got to pawn it, after all.'

"But do you think she'd go into that shop again? Not much! And she started to get sort of hysterical. Now if there's anything I hate, it's scenes. So I grabs the ticket and the money and runs back to Ornstein's place myself. Well!"

Maggie paused and drew a long breath.

"Well, in I went, and at first I couldn't see anything—he had the lights turned so low. I never thought a pawnbroker had to economize on gas, did you? Well, anyway, a voice comes out of a round piece of whiteness, and I saw Ornstein, all of a sud-

den, as if he'd just appeared, like a ghost. Well, I guess I was startled, and I guess that accounts for what happened after that.

It was a new experience, and him showing up there all of a sudden, small and fat and round and white in that funny, soft darkness, and asking me in that soft, velvety voice of his what he could do for me—well, really—perhaps *you* can understand."

Maggie paused more or less hopefully—her tone indicating that she had failed of comprehension so far—and she was not disappointed.

"What would you have done?" she asked.

"I?" exclaimed the boss. "I would just have gone all to pieces."

"Well," said Maggie, recovering conspicuously her self-esteem, "I didn't do that. But I couldn't speak. Wasn't that funny? I simply couldn't say a word. You see—it had come over me all of a sudden that it was Jennie's wedding-ring that Bessie had pawned—and what Jennie would feel if she were to know that her ring had been in a pawnbroker's shop for even *one minute*. So I just pushed the ticket at him and the money, and waited.

"And he looked the ticket all over, both sides, and then he looked up at me and shook his fat, bald head very slow, and handed them both back to me. And then he spoke!

"And the things he said! I shall never forget them! He said—you don't mind if I don't show you *exactly* how he talked—he said: 'Young lady, you ain't got no right to this ticket,' and he went on: 'Young lady, not fifteen minutes ago a young lady with brownish eyes and reddish hair and very small fingers, so that her wedding-ring won't stay on no finger but her thumb, come in here and pawned this ring. And now you, a tallish young lady with bluish eyes and blondish hair, come in here and ask for that same ring. What do you think I think?'

"Well, for the life of me, Mr. Thatcher, I couldn't answer him. I saw he was getting suspicious, and that something awful was going to happen. And it was.

"Well, he goes on, getting nicer and sweeter every minute, so that I begun to

think everything was all right, and nothing was going to happen. But it was.

"Now, young lady," he says, 'I got a daughter your age, and she's a sweetish girl like you'—I never noticed it before Saturday afternoon, Mr. Thatcher, but isn't it strange how often some people put 'ish' on everything?"

"It is, indeed, Maggie," replied the boss; "but you must be a born orthographist to notice such a thing at such a moment."

Maggie nodded, making a mental note to find out through the dictionary or otherwise what an orthographist was, and went on:

"So he says: 'Now young lady, confess, and everything will be all right.' And that, Mr. Thatcher, was when I got mad. Imagine him imploring me to confess to him? I wouldn't confess to anybody but the priest for anything or anybody! So I just drew myself up pretty straight and looked haughtily at him, and said: 'I won't do any such thing.'

"And then, Mr. Thatcher, was when he showed his real nature. He never stops smiling, but just shakes his head and sighs, and says, very gently: 'Then just step this way, young lady.' And I stepped, thinking he was going to get Jennie's ring out of the safe and give it to me—and I stepped right into a little back room he had, with bars all over the window, and he following, but only to the door. And then I heard a noise—behind me—and when I turned, I knew the worst. I wish I could describe my feelings!"

"Try it," begged the boss, leaning forward in breathless interest.

Maggie shook her head.

"I couldn't do it in a thousand years—all I knew was that I was alone in that little room, locked in, and that the awful sounds I could hear just beyond the door was Ornstein, telephoning for the police!"

"The police!" reiterated the boss in a tone indicating horror.

"The police! There was I, a prisoner—who, before I had heard of Mrs. Graham's wedding-ring and Ornstein's refusing to pawn it for her, had never done anything to get myself into trouble—at least, such trouble as this. Ain't it funny, Mr.

Thatcher, what a little thing will turn the whole course of a peaceful life?"

"It is indeed," said the boss sadly.

"In this case that wedding-ring was turning the courses of a whole lot of peaceful lives," Maggie went on. "In the first place, Bessie did a noble thing. She got so scared because I stayed in Ornstein's shop so long she came in after me—and Ornstein seized her and threw her into the little room with me—until the police came. And when she saw me and realized that life was over for both of us, she flopped all over me just like a rag doll, and down we went on the floor together—and stayed there, waiting for the police and our doom.

"And the thoughts we thought, Mr. Thatcher! May you never suffer as we did then—all on account of that pig-headed Jimmie Blaine! I could see mother trying to bear up under the disgrace of having her only child in jail—and growing weaker and weaker, with no one to support her, and finally dying of starvation, just as I emerged from my cell, old and pale and emaciated! And Bessie said afterward she could see all those five children getting into trouble without her—one of them burning to death from playing with matches, another boiling to death in his mother's boiler—and the baby falling off the fire-escape where she'd been put for air!

"Jimmie said afterward it was a funny thing that we didn't think of sending for him, because he knows both the policemen of Medford, and could have got us fixed up in a minute. But all I ever thought about Jimmie just then was that I prayed to God that he'd never find out that I'd got into trouble through my fondness for jewelry—just as he'd said I would. Don't you hate to give those 'I-told-you-so' people any satisfaction?"

"I should say so!" agreed the boss. "But there were you and Bessie on the floor, waiting for the police, and you never thought of me!"

"Yes, I did," insisted Maggie; "I thought of you more than once. But I didn't want to bring you into anything disgraceful unless it was absolutely necessary. Besides"—she paused and sighed—"I was afraid you wouldn't be any match for Orn-

stein. Anyhow, in the mean time, what do you think had happened. Jennie's rheumatism had got worse! It just seemed as if God was against me and Bessie that day! Well, Jennie couldn't manage those five squalling kids, and back she comes to turn them over to Bessie—and couldn't find Bessie, naturally!

"Well, of course, she thinks of looking for her at my house—and mother, who was out when we went out to pawn the ring, doesn't know anything about us—and Jennie starts her oldest kid searching for us, and of course, that boy-detective finds out in five minutes that we were locked up in Ornstein's little back room! And Jennie says, the minute she heard it, that we'd gone there to pawn her wedding-ring! Now what do you call that?"

"I call that being d—er—psychic," replied the boss, with awe.

"Well, I call it being too ready to think evil," replied Maggie, indignantly. "But the first thing we knew about Jennie's psychichness was the most awful row in Ornstein's shop. For a minute we thought the house was on fire—and then I felt something as big as an airship jump up into my throat—afterward I found out it was only my heart. For we recognized those voices!

"They were shouting and yelling all at once—Jennie was demanding that Ornstein have us sent to jail for life—mother was telling Ornstein the most awful things about Jennie—I don't believe any of them were true, but you see, she figured if she could make Jennie out bad enough, I'd seem an angel by comparison. I don't know whether you've noticed, but mothers always have a wonderful opinion of you—before other people."

"I've noticed it," responded the boss reminiscently.

"Well, anyhow, after they'd kept at it—kids and all—till there wasn't a yell left in anybody, we could hear old Ornstein talking in that nice, soft, sneaky way he had to us, and then we could hear the police come in—we knew both their voices, having always gone on the policemen's picnic—and then, horror upon horror, Ornstein opened our prison door and brought us out. I wish

you could realize the awfulness of that moment!"

Maggie paused, shuddering.

"I'm trying to," said the boss, shivering sympathetically.

"Well, that was the most dramatic moment of my whole life," Maggie went on, shaking her head. "In between the policemen stood Jimmie Blaine, in his shirt-sleeves! Wasn't that awful?"

"I can't imagine anything more terrible," the boss replied.

"There he stood"—Maggie pursued her story—"a big cigar in one side of his mouth that had gone out, and no hat on. And I'll tell you he looked white and funny." And when I saw that he wasn't going to laugh at my misfortune, I began to feel better—I saw a chance then and there to teach him a lesson—not for my sake, because I never expected to be free again—but for the sake of the girl he would keep company with in my place.

"And so I held my head up high, and began to compose a few last remarks that I would hurl at him over my left shoulder—or the right, if he was on that side, just before I was incarcerated forever, when Jennie began yelling out that I was a thief—and ma took a fit, and Jimmie caught her and eased her into a chair, and walked over to Jennie and put his hand over her mouth, and said: 'Stop, for Heaven's sake!'

"And then he turned to the two policemen and says: 'There's some mistake—if we can keep this woman still we can find out what it is.' With which everybody agreed—Jennie having made no hit whatever with her vocabulary nor the way she put it over.

"But just at that moment the policeman that had hold of Bessie sings out: 'Give me a chair for this kid,' and heavens, she did look awful!

"And right then and there it come over me that Bessie was going to get the worst of this deal. I remembered, just like a flash, those things you told me about being an accessory to a crime—and I saw that that was all I was—but that Bessie was the real thing! And at the same instant, it came over me how to get out of all this trouble!"

"And how was that?" the boss was growing impatient for the dénouement.

"Wait! It came over me just like a flash, and like a flash I spoke. I said: 'Mr. Ornstein, this is all your fault. Only yesterday you refused to keep Mrs. Graham's wedding-ring, but lent her the money instead. Now both Bessie Barns and I knew that even that five dollars wasn't enough, and we wanted to get some more money for Mrs. Graham.' And, if you will believe me, Mr. Thatcher, I didn't have to say another word! In fact, I couldn't. There were so many other words being said.

"But, believe me, this time, they were all kind words—the kindest you ever heard for me and Bessie, for trying to pawn Jennie's ring to help Mrs. Graham! The policemen let us go and started a collection for Mrs. Graham.

"Jennie threw herself on us and slobbered all over us, and took her wedding-ring and her five kids and beat it! And mother said I was the best girl in the world—and Jimmie looked at me as if I was a saint. And, in spite of all that, Bessie tried to say, no one heard her—her voice was too faint, and after I had pinched her half a dozen times she decided to mind her own business. Now, I suppose you're going to tell me I told a lie—but I didn't, for I never got a chance—I just started to suggest one, and left the rest to their imaginations."

"I am not going to tell you anything of the sort," replied the boss, sincerely, "you had a right to save Bessie from the consequences of—of, say, Jimmie's obstinacy."

"That's what I say," exclaimed Maggie, triumphantly, "but I'm glad you see it the

way I do. And after that we started around to give Mrs. Graham the policemen's collection, Jimmie carrying it, and sort of hanging back behind the others with me. And when we got to the corner I says to him: 'Jimmie, let me add the five dollars Ornstein gave us for Jennie's ring.' And Jimmie stands stock-still and says: 'Have you got that yet?' And I says 'Yes,' and he says: 'Then we'll take it right back to Ornstein,' and then, well, then, Mr. Thatcher, I began to get really mad. And without thinking—almost—what I did—I tells Jimmie the whole truth, and how I'd pawned that ring to get me the lawnyett he was too mean to give me.

"And, Mr. Thatcher, you never saw a man's face get so many colors. First, it was gray and then green and then purple and then very white, and he says: 'Excuse me a minute,' and off he goes.

"Well, of course, I thought he was going to call the policemen back and have me arrested, after all—and I was all for beating it. But ma said no, that she knew human nature, and that Jimmie had a noble nature.

"And as usual she was right.

"Back comes Jimmie inside of about three minutes, smiling and very humble and meek—and he hands me a parcel and bows just like I was a queen—and I opens it—just like one.

"And there was the gold lawnyett."

Maggie paused and drew toward her the shining object on the desk. She pushed the spring and raised the glasses to her bright eyes.

"It was worth nearly getting arrested for, wasn't it?" she asked ecstatically.

ENTIRETY

EACH drop of the tossing waters,
No matter how small it be,
Mirrors the mighty ocean
And globes in itself the sea.

So every heart compresses,
Hides—like a drop of the sea—
Holds in itself the thundering
Tides of humanity!

Louis Ginsberg.
9 ARGOSY

"IF I ONLY HAD Another Chance"



RICHARD A. OLDHAM

"IF I ONLY HAD ANOTHER CHANCE," said Richard A. Oldham, 58 years old—a telegraph operator struggling with family responsibilities. He got it. Haywood's Tire Surgery gave him that chance. He earned \$2200.00 in four months.

Most people believe that "Opportunity knocks but once" at a man's door. We believe it knocks as often as a man will hear it.

Here is YOUR OPPORTUNITY

30,000,000 automobile tires wearing down every day. Cuts, gashes, tears, bruises, broken fabrics, every kind of an accident that can happen to any tire, inside or out, is taking place. All can be repaired and saved for long service—4000 to 5000 more miles. Tires must not be junked—they will not be junked. The chance for making money is simply wonderful.



The vocation which earned Mr. N. E. Gibbard, of Charlotte, Mich., the gross sum of \$43,000 in the first nine months of 1919; and which relieved Alex Etzrode of Scranton, Pa., of punching a time clock, and made him a BUSINESS MAN with a first year gross earning of \$30,000.

There Are Four Thousand Haywood Tire Surgery Stations in the United States

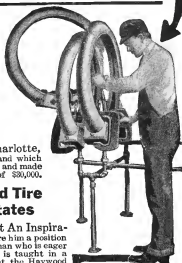
There must be hundreds and hundreds more. What An Inspiration To The Man Who Would Learn a Profession that would insure him a position Anywhere He Cared to Go! What a Field of Endeavor for the man who is eager to own a paying business of his own! Haywood's Tire Surgery is taught in a two weeks' course of practical instruction and demonstration at the Haywood Tire & Equipment Company, Indianapolis, OR THE COMPLETE COURSE IS THOROUGHLY TAUGHT BY MAIL. Without the least knowledge of tires you can

FREE Book

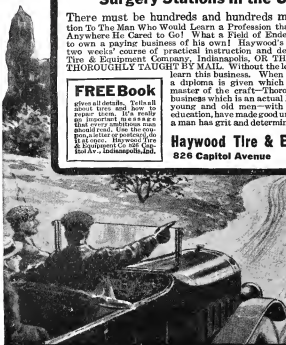
get all details. Tells all about tires and how to repair them. It's really an important message that every ambitious man should read. Use the coupon, a letter or postcard, do it at once. Haywood Tire & Equipment Co 526 Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind.

learn this business. When the course is completed a diploma is given which marks the holder as a master of the craft—Thoroughly fitted to establish a business which is an actual National Service. Both young and old men—without a finished education, have made good under Haywood guidance. If a man has grit and determination he is bound to Succeed.

Haywood Tire & Equipment Company
826 Capitol Avenue Indianapolis, Ind.



1/2 Mile to HAYWOOD'S
TIRE SURGERY STATION



Which to Succeed?
M. Haywood President

MY PROPOSITION

"Bring me an ambitious he-man with a GOOD, COMMON SENSE BRAIN, and I will return him a BUSINESS MAN with a Most Wonderful Profession With

HAYWOOD TIRE & EQUIPMENT COMPANY
826 Capitol Avenue, Indianapolis, Ind.
DEAR Sir: Please send me by return mail your free book on the new Haywood Tire Surgery Method and the details of your free school of tire repairing.

Name.....
Address.....

A Lovely Complexion all Summer

At every fashionable summer resort in America women of beauty and refinement depend upon this delightful facial preparation to keep the skin soft, clear and attractive. They have absolute confidence in the merits of

Hinds *Honey and Almond* Cream



Copyright 1920
A. S. Hinds

Safe from Sunburn

If you'll just apply a few drops of this snowy white, daintily scented lotion night and morning, and after exposure, as directed, your face, neck and hands will not be injured by sun or wind. Hinds Cream softens, cleanses and relieves the tiny pores of dangerous germs, alleviates irritation, soreness and roughness, and gives Nature an *honest* chance to restore the velvety, pure, fresh and colorful complexion of youth.

The other preparations also are superior in fragrance and quality. You will be charmed by their beneficial action.

FOR TRIAL: Be sure to enclose amount required, but do not send foreign stamps or foreign money. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream 5c. Either Cold or Disappearing Cream 5c. Talcum 2c. Face Powder, sample, 2c; trial size 15c. Trial Cake Soap, 8c.

Hinds Cream Toilet Comforts selling everywhere or mailed postpaid in U. S. A. from laboratory.

A. S. HINDS 277 West Street Portland, Maine

